

Rurouni Kenshin

The cover features a central illustration of two characters. In the upper half, a man with dark hair and a white mask covering his lower face is shown in a dynamic pose, holding a sword that has just been cut through, with red liquid dripping from the blade. In the lower half, a young man with vibrant orange hair and a blue jacket looks forward with a determined expression. The background is a textured, patterned surface with floral and leaf motifs in shades of green, brown, and gold.

SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL

Story & Art by

Nobuhiro Watsuki

volume

1



和月伸宏

NOBUHIRO WATSUKI



I FINALLY DID IT!

THE COVER'S DONE FOR THE VOLUME, FINALLY. HAVING JUST RELOCATED OUR WORKPLACE-AND MY CHIEF ASSISTANT HAVING JUST GONE ON VACATION-THERE WERE SO MANY LITTLE THINGS THAT NEEDED TAKING CARE OF, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO BOTHER ANYONE, SO.... DOING THE COLORING WAS FUN, ACTUALLY; I THINK THAT, IN THE FUTURE, I'D LIKE TO DO AS MUCH OF IT AS I CAN. 'COURSE, IT'S WHAT I SHOULD HAVE BEEN DOING ALL ALONG... DOES THAT MAKE ME A BAD PERSON...?

Rurouni Kenshin, which has found fans not only in Japan but around the world, first made its appearance in 1992, as an original short story in *Weekly Shonen Jump Special*. Later rewritten and published as a regular, continuing *Jump* series in 1994, *Rurouni Kenshin* ended serialization in 1999 but continued in popularity, as evidenced by the 2000 publication of *Yahiko no Sakabatô* ("Yahiko's Reversed-Edge Sword") in *Weekly Shonen Jump*. His most current work, *Busô Renkin* ("Armored Alchemist"), began publication in June 2003, also in *Jump*.

RUROUNI KENSHIN
VOL. 7: IN THE 11th YEAR OF MEIJI, MAY 14th
The SHONEN JUMP Graphic Novel Edition

STORY AND ART BY
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI

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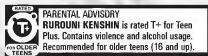
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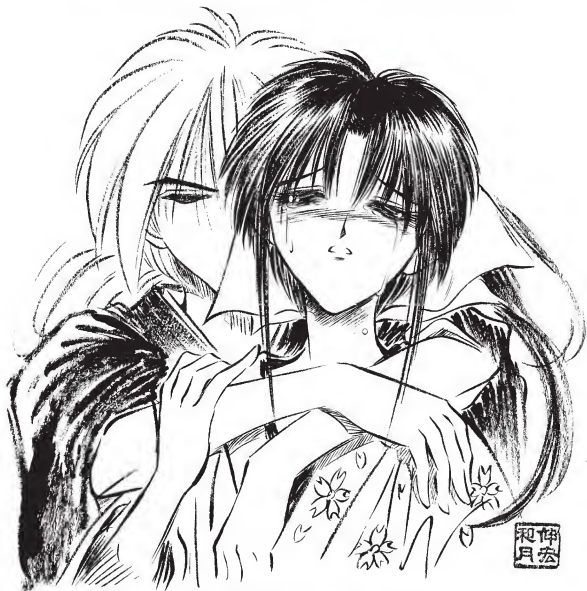


SHONEN JUMP GRAPHIC NOVEL

Rurouni Kenshin™

MEIJI SWORDSMAN ROMANTIC STORY

VOL. 7: IN THE 11th YEAR OF MEIJI, MAY 14th



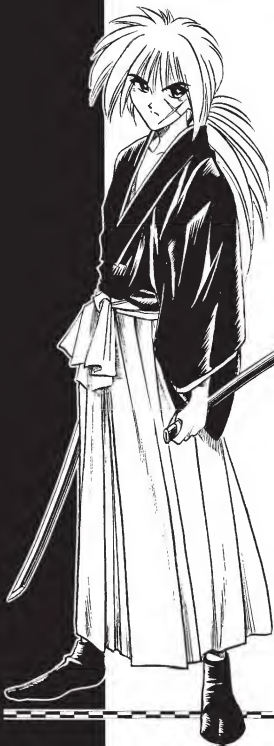
STORY AND ART BY
NOBUHIRO WATSUKI

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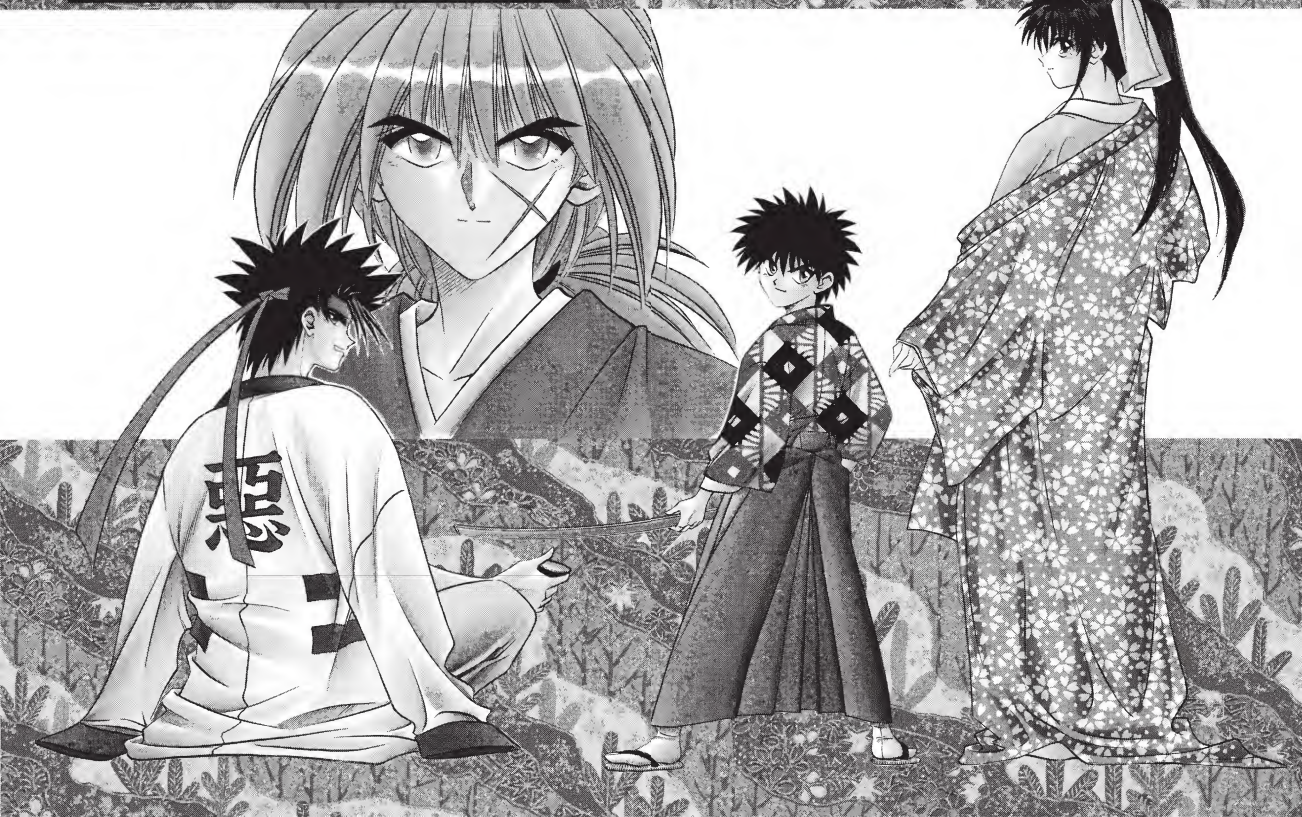
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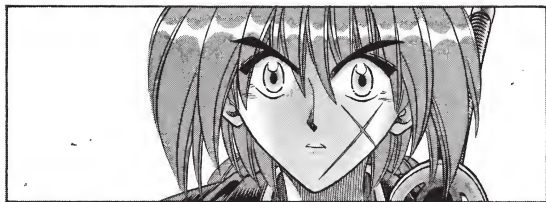


Act 48
Resurrection
of the Wolf











C'MON.
LET'S
GET ON
HOME.



WHAT
WERE YOU
DREAMING
ABOUT?

SLAP

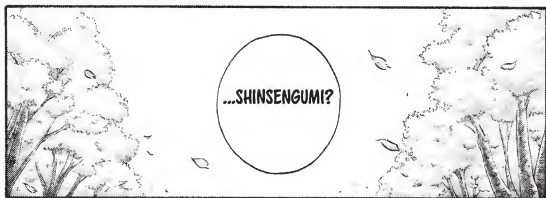
WE'RE
TALKING.
HERE!

IS
THERE
ANOTHER
KENSIN
AROUND?!

?!



.....



...SHINSENGUMI?



YOU
WERE
DREAMING
ABOUT YOUR
PAST.

I THOUGHT
YOU WERE IN
A DEEPER
SLEEP THAN
USUAL.



THOSE
DAYS
HAVEN'T
VISITED...

...IN A
VERY
LONG
TIME.

THEY
WERE OUR
NEMESIS.

OUR
SWORDS
HAVE
CROSSED
MANY
TIMES.

...YOU MEAN
THE FAMOUS
ARMY THAT
FOUGHT THE
REVOLUTION-
ARIES,
RIGHT?

WHEN
YOU SAY
"SHINSEN-
GUMI"...

"THE REVOLUTIONARIES
HAD FALLEN TO
FIGHTING THEIR
INDIVIDUAL FEUDS.
KYOTO BECAME A
CITY OF BLOODY
WIND AND GLISTENING
BLADES. THAT'S WHEN
THE SHINSENGUMI
TOOK UP THEIR
BLADES TO UPHOLD
ITS LAWS.



"ORIGINALLY,
THE SHINSEN-
GUMI WERE A
GROUP OF
SWORDSMEN
OF THE EDO
TAMA REGION,
EMPLOYED
BY THE
GUARDIAN
OF KYOTO.

"THEY FELL IN THEIR
FIGHT AGAINST
MODERN WEAPONS AND
THE TIDES OF TIME—BUT
THEY WERE AND ALWAYS
WILL BE THE LARGEST
AND STRONGEST GROUP
OF SWORDSMEN KNOWN
TO JAPANESE HISTORY."

"THEY CALLED THEM THE
WOLVES OF MIBU." THEY
SHOOK KYOTO WITH AWE
WITH THEIR WELL-TRAINED
SWORDS. THEIR STRIPED
LIGHT-BLUE JACKETS. THEIR
LACK OF FEAR OF DEATH...
AND THEIR RED BANNER,
BEARING THE
CHARACTER MAKOTO—
TRUTH.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT (BACK ROW): TAKEDA/YANA ZAKI/INOUE/
HIJIKATA/EIKURA/SAITO/SHIMADA. FRONT ROW: HARADA/KONDO/OKITA

*WHEN FOUNDED, THEY WERE BASED AT MIBU VILLAGE

...ESPECIALLY
THE TEAM
LEADERS OF THE
1ST, 2ND, AND
3RD OF THE TEN
TOTAL UNITS...
THEY WERE
ASTONISHING.

BUT THE
OFFICERS...

IT
WAS TO
KEEP
PEACE IN
KYOTO.

THEIR
MISSION
WASN'T
TO DUEL.

BUT THEY
SAY THE
SHINSENGUMI
LAUNCH GROUP
ATTACKS ON
SINGLE
FIGHTERS.

ISN'T
THAT
A BIT
COWARDLY
?

WELL...

GOOD
QUESTION.

WEIRD,
RIGHT
?

IF IT'S A
"UNIT," WHY
ARE THEY
"TEAM"
LEADERS?

NOT
ALL OF
THEM WERE
STRONG OR
HONORABLE.
IT'S
TRUE.

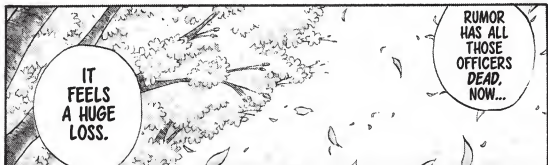


...BUT
NEVER
WERE THEY
FINISHED.



THE
LEADERS OF
THE 1ST, 2ND,
AND 3RD UNITS.
THIS ONE
FOUGHT...

...AGAINST
THEM, SEVERAL
TIMES...



IT
FEELS
A HUGE
LOSS.

RUMOR
HAS ALL
THOSE
OFFICERS
DEAD,
NOW...



COMPARED TO THE
EX-REVOLUTIONARIES
HOLDING GOVERNMENT
POSTS RIGHT NOW,
TIME SEEMS TO
HAVE BROUGHT THEM
EVEN CLOSER.

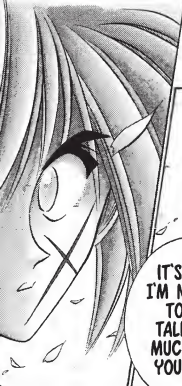
"WHATEVER OUR
POLITICS, WE
ALL FOUGHT
WITH LIVES AND
PHILOSOPHIES
RIDING ON OUR
SWORDS."

"WE WERE ON
DIFFERENT
SIDES, BUT IT
WAS NOTHING
PERSONAL."

MM...
SORT
OF.

YOU'RE
PRETTY
SYMPATHETIC.
WEREN'T
THEY YOUR
ENEMY?





IT'S JUST...
I'M NOT USED
TO YOUR
TALKING SO
MUCH ABOUT
YOUR PAST.

NO,
IT'S NOT
THAT.

YOU
FIND
THAT
ODD?

WOW...

QUIT
STANDING
AROUND,
KENSHIN.

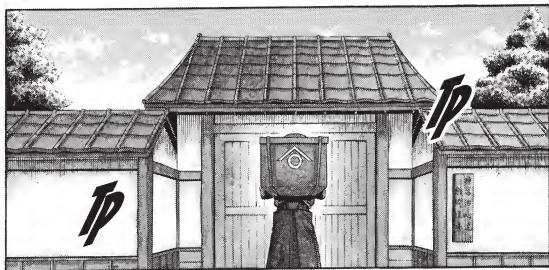
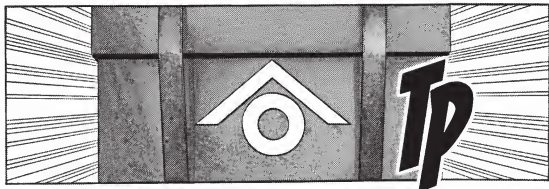
THOSE
DAYS
HAVEN'T
VISITED...

LET'S
GET
HOME.

...IN A
VERY
LONG
TIME.

THOSE
DREAMS
OUGHT TO
HAVE BEEN
LONG PAST.

WHY
NOW...?





FUJITA
GORŌ...

HOW
ARE YOU
TODAY?

...IS
THE
NAME.

I'VE
COME
FROM
TAMA,
SELLING
THE ISHIDA
POWDERED
MEDICINE.

KLOP



TOO
BAD.
OH...I
SEE.



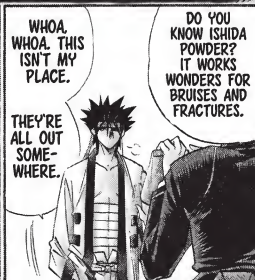
HEY
YOU.

YES?

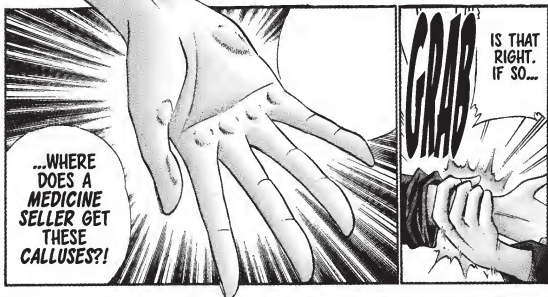
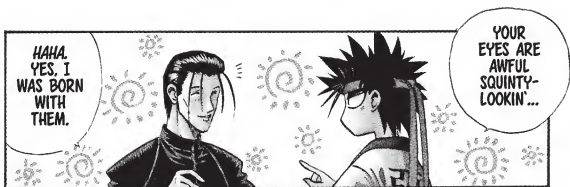


WHOA.
WHOA. THIS
ISN'T MY
PLACE.

THEY'RE
ALL OUT
SOME-
WHERE.



DO YOU
KNOW ISHIDA
POWDER?
IT WORKS
WONDERS FOR
BRUISES AND
FRACTURES.



《 READ THIS WAY 》

IN THAT CASE...

SO. THE BATTOSAI IS NOT AT HOME.

SS

HEH HEH ...

!!

YOU CAME HERE TO FIGHT. DID YOU?

CARRYING A CONCEALED WEAPON...

THIS GUY KNOWS KENSHIN'S PAST—

HEH

...A GIFT.

...I SHALL HAVE TO LEAVE HIM...

SHINGO

YOUR TRUE
IDENTITY
WILL BE
FOUND...



...WITH
THIS
FIST!

KKON

THEN
LET'S
FIGHT!!



FINE
WITH
ME.

BNI!

RAAH!!



READ
THIS
WAY

GOOD. YOUR
PUNCH LIVES
UP TO ITS
REPUTATION.



ZZZZ



SOOP

IN KYOTO,
DURING THE
BAKUMATSU,
A PUNCH
LIKE THAT...

...WOULD
BE
NOTHING.

BUT
ONLY IN
THIS AGE OF
WEAKNESS,
CALLED
MEIJI.

NO
EFFECT—?!





速
えん

は
え

HE'S
FAST!!

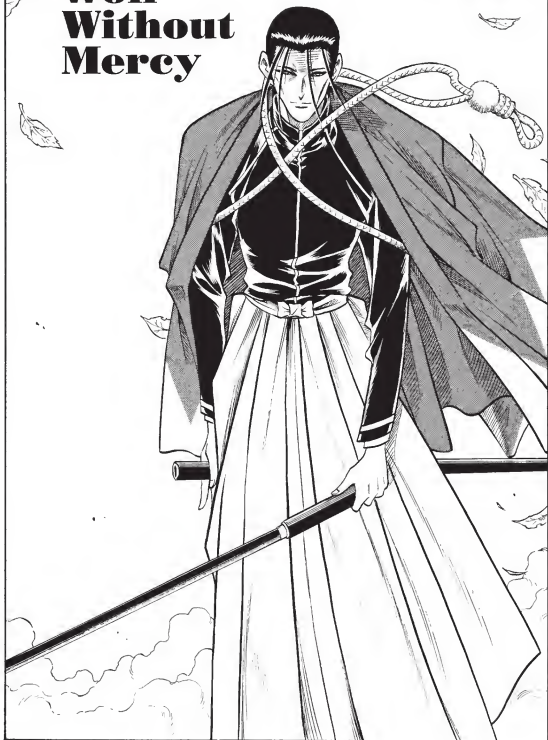


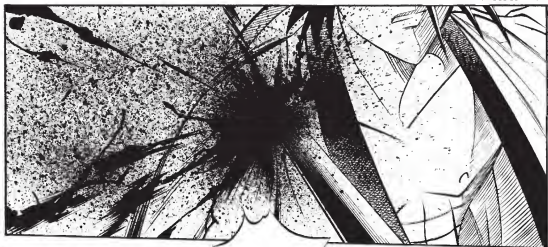
Rurouni Kenshin

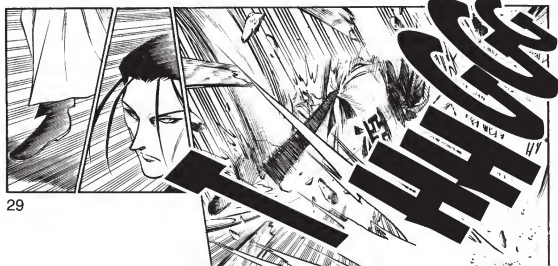


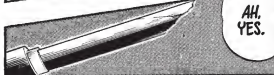
Act 49
**Wolf
Without
Mercy**

仲
伸
月
和

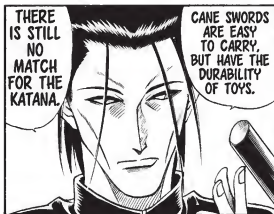








AH,
YES.

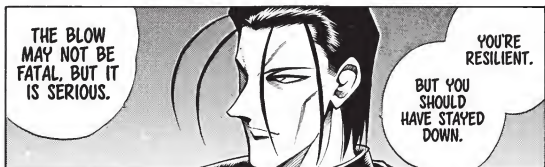


THERE
IS STILL
NO
MATCH
FOR THE
KATANA.

CANE SWORDS
ARE EASY
TO CARRY,
BUT HAVE THE
DURABILITY
OF TOYS.



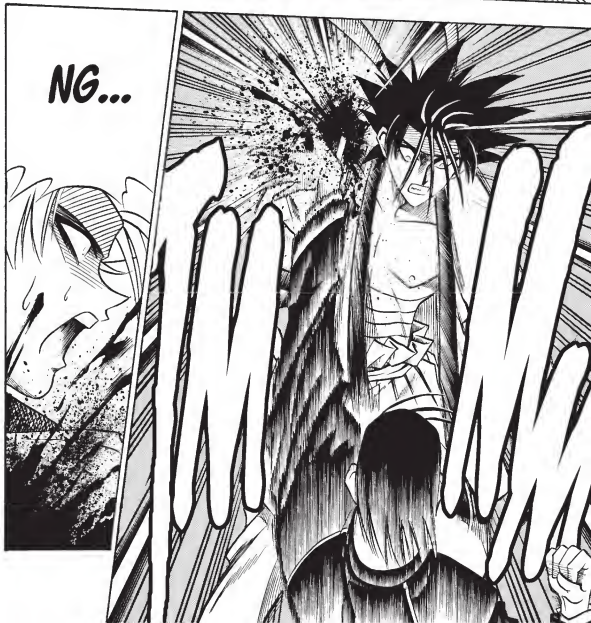
◀ READ
THIS WAY ▶



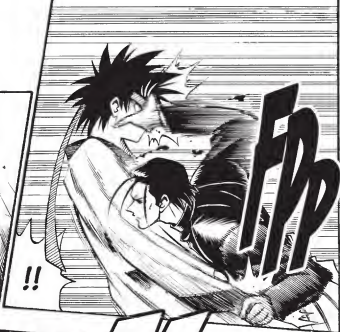
THIS FIGHT IS JUST STARTING!!



SHUT UP!
I'M WOUNDED,
BUT YOUR SWORD IS BROKEN!



◀ READ
THIS
WAY ▶





WHY
ARE YOU
WALKING SO
SLOWLY,
KENSIN?



HE'S SURE
QUIET...IS
HE SICK OR
SOMETHING?



THEN
PERHAPS
I CAN BE
OF SOME
USE.



THE
SUN'LL SET
US ON
FIRE IF
WE DON'T
HURRY.

HM...?



IT'S A
PUBLIC
STREET.

CAN'T
I WALK
DOWN IT?

DON'T
ACT SO
SURPRISED.

HUH?
...MEGUMI!

WHY
ARE YOU
HERE?!



*ACTUALLY, SHE WAS PAID BY YUZAEMON.



GOT TO
STOP
WORRY-
ING...

NO.
REALLY.
IT'S
NOTHING.

IT'LL
JUST
UPSET
THE
OTHERS.

WOULD
YOU LIKE
ME TO TAKE
A LOOK AT
YOU?

YOU
SEEM
REALLY
DOWN.

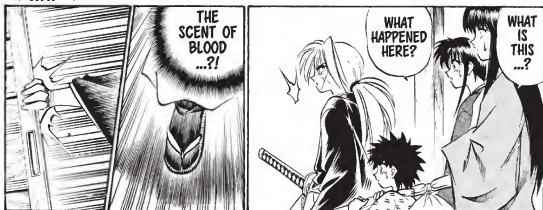


...IN
DREAMS
OF THE
PAST.

THERE'S
NO
USE
DWELLING
...

**KLA-
TATT**







WELL, WELL.
SHALL WE
START WITH
A DRINK,
FUJITA-KUN?

OR,
THEN
AGAIN...

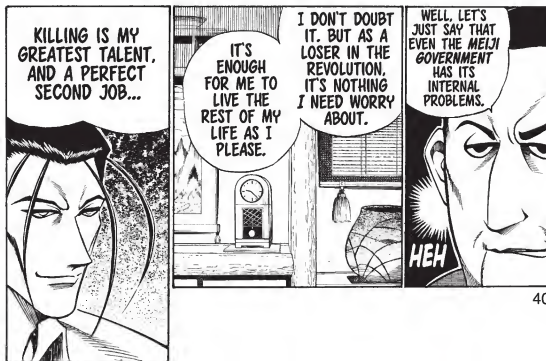
...SHOULD
THAT BE
"SAITŌ-KUN"?

HEH

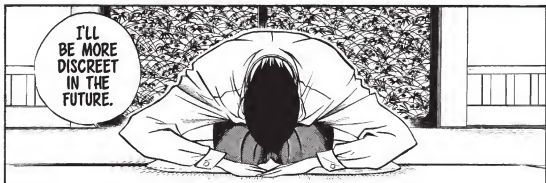
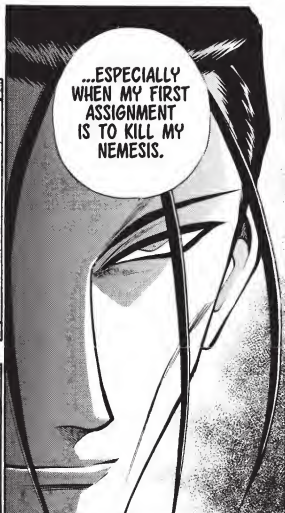


READ
THIS
WAY





READ
THIS
WAY





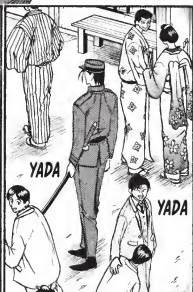
IF
YOU'LL
EXCUSE
ME...

...I'LL
BE OFF
NOW.

HE'S GONE BY
"FUJITA GORŌ" SINCE
THE REVOLUTION.
AFTER JOINING THE
POLICE SWORDSMEN
UNIT DURING THE
SEINAN WAR, HE
NOW SERVES AS
LIEUTENANT.

SOME SAY
HE'S STRONGER
EVEN THAN
OKITA SŌSHI,
FAMOUS AS THE
MOST POWERFUL
MAN IN THE
SHINSENGUMI.

...FORMER
LEADER OF
THE 3RD
SHINSENGUMI
UNIT, SAITŌ
HAJIME.



EVEN
JIN-E
COULDN'T
DEFEAT
BATTOSAI...

...BUT,
PERHAPS,
THAT MAN
WILL.



HMF...

DON'T
BE SUCH
A CYNIC,
AKAMATSU.

I DON'T
LIKE
HIM.

I DON'T
BUY THE
BOW-AND-
SCRAPE.

HE'S A
COMRADE
IN JIN-E'S
CAUSE. MAKE
PEACE
WITH HIM.



...BUT, IF THIS
GOES WELL, I
CAN FINALLY
SAY *GOODBYE*
TO THIS SERVILE
JOB AND ALL
ITS POLITICS.

WHEN I WAS
REQUESTED TO
ASSASSINATE
THE BATTOSAI,
I WAS
LOST...

THE "WOLVES
OF MIBU,"
THEY
CALLED
THEM.

HEH



AMUSINGLY
ENOUGH, THE
MAN WHO'LL MAKE
IT COME TRUE
ALSO HAPPENS TO
BE THE SAME
SHINSENGUMI WHO
THREATENED MY
LIFE DAILY.





...NOW
HE'S JUST A
HOUSEBROKEN
DOG, WITHOUT
HIS FANGS.

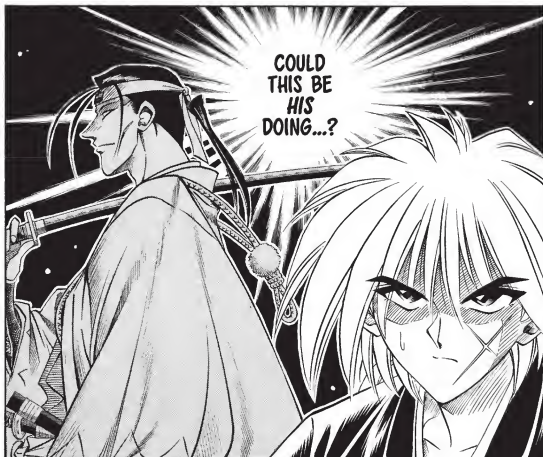
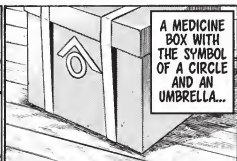


IT'S TOO
DARK, I CAN'T
SEE THE
WOUND WELL!

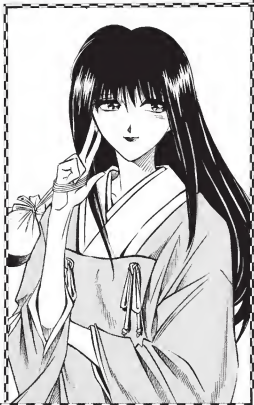
SANOSUKE...

BRING A
CANDLE OR
SOMETHING
TO GIVE
ME MORE
LIGHT!!





Rurouni Kenshin



Act 50

S c h e m e



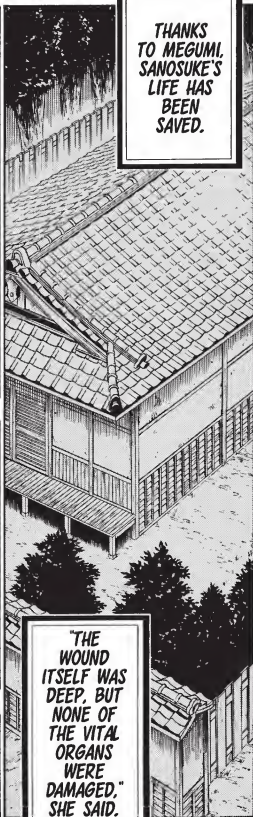
和伸
宏

**BUT,
AFTER
THREE
DAYS...**



**...SANOSUKE
HAS YET
TO REGAIN
CONSCIOUS-
NESS.**

**THANKS
TO MEGUMI,
SANOSUKE'S
LIFE HAS
BEEN
SAVED.**



**KLA-
TAT-
TAT...**



**MEGUMI-
SAN.**

**"THE
WOUND
ITSELF WAS
DEEP, BUT
NONE OF
THE VITAL
ORGANS
WERE
DAMAGED,"
SHE SAID.**

READ
THIS
WAY

HOW'S HE
DOING?

THANKS,
I'LL DO
THAT.

THE
BATH
IS
YOURS.

I'LL WATCH
SANOSUKE,
SO GO
AHEAD AND
RELAX.

JUST
SLEEPING,
STILL.

I CAN'T
BELIEVE
SHE'S A
DOCTOR
...

HEY! WAKE
UP! OR I'LL
START
SHOPPING
FOR THE
COFFIN!

SLAP
SLAP
SLAP
SLAP
NGH...

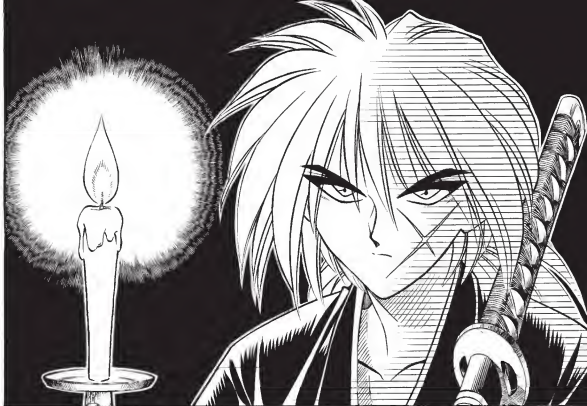
I THINK
HE'LL BE FINE,
THOUGH. HE'S AS
TOUGH AS A
COCKROACH.

STILL
THINKING
AND
SCOWLING
HOUR AFTER
HOUR.

HE
HASN'T
CHANGED,
EITHER...

YEAH.

KENSHIN'S
AT THE
DOJO
AGAIN?



THE MEDICINE BOX WITH THE CIRCLE AND UMBRELLA WAS OFTEN USED BY THE SHINSENGUMI AS A DISGUISE.

THE BLADE PARALLEL TO THE GROUND IS THE SYMBOL OF THE SHINSENGUMI'S DISTINCTIVE "FLAT THRUST."

...THE "GATOTSU," THE LEFT-HANDED FLAT THRUST AT WHICH HE'S SO PROFICIENT.

AND THAT POWER MUST BE FROM...

...FOR ALL THE POSSIBILITIES...

...STILL, IT CAN ONLY BE HIS DOING.

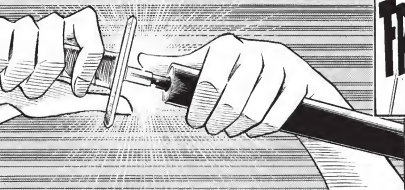
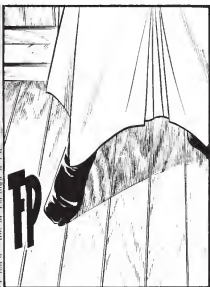
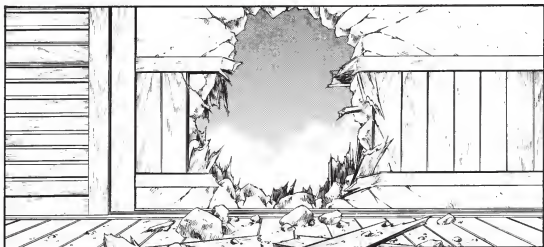


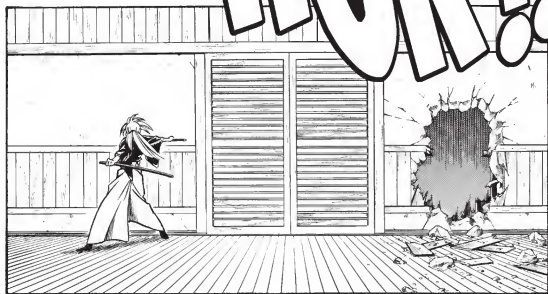
HAS HE COME
TO SETTLE OUR
OLD SCORES...

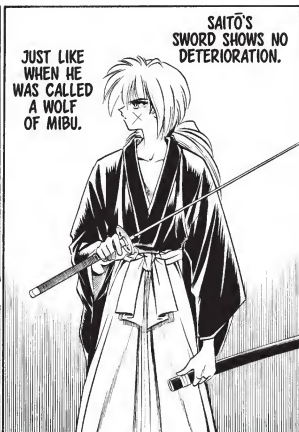
...OR DOES
HE HAVE
SOMETHING
ELSE IN
MIND?



CAPTAIN OF
THE 3RD
SHINSENGUMI
UNIT, SAITŌ
HAJIME.









HEH

SO
IT IS,
SAITO-
SAN.

WHAT
BUSINESS
HAVE YOU
WITH ME?

AKAMATSU-
SAN...
WAS IT?

AND IT'S
"FUJITA"
NOW.

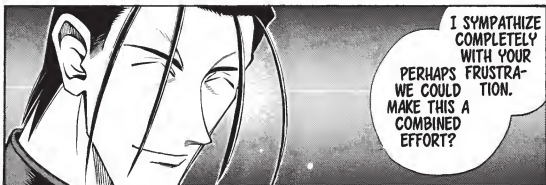
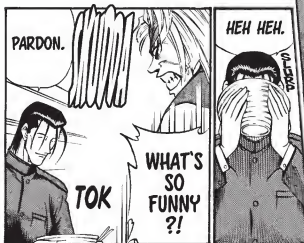
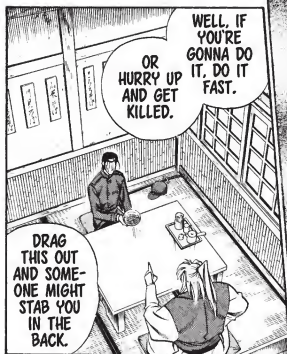
I LOVE
PLAIN
SOBA.

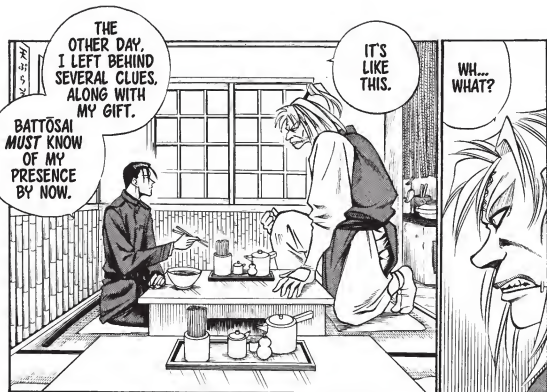
SLURP

...I
DON'T
LIKE
YOU.

NONE,
REALLY.

ONLY
...

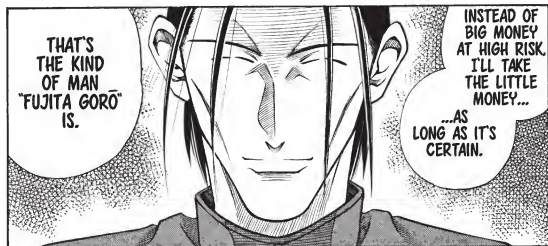






I TOLD
YOU, MY
WISH IS TO
JUST LIVE MY
LIFE AS I
PLEASE.

I SAID
THAT TO
SHIBUMI-SAN.
BUT THE OLD
GRUDGES REALLY
DON'T MATTER
ANYMORE.



THAT'S
THE KIND
OF MAN
"FUJITA GORŌ"
IS.

INSTEAD OF
BIG MONEY
AT HIGH RISK,
I'LL TAKE
THE LITTLE
MONEY...
...AS
LONG AS IT'S
CERTAIN.

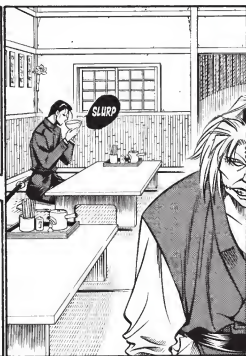


BUT
REMEMBER
ONE
THING...

...I'M
STILL THE
NUMBER ONE
ASSASSIN
IN THIS
OUTFIT.

THAT,
I LIKE.
I'LL TAKE
YOUR
OFFER.

HEH





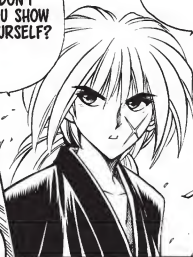


SAITŌ.



WHY
DON'T
YOU SHOW
YOURSELF?

IT'S AS
YOUR
LETTER
DIRECTED.



J-JANGJANGJANG

HOON

WHO
ARE
YOU?

SHAPP

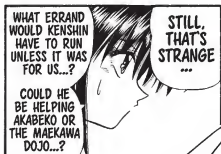
HMPH.
BLOCKING
MY CHAIN
WITH
EASE.

YOU ARE
THE
BATTOSAI,
AREN'T
YOU.

I'VE
COME TO
TAKE
YOUR
LIFE.

AKAMATSU
ARUNDO.

◀ READ
THIS
WAY ▶



PARDON
ME.





I'VE
HEARD
THERE'S A
HIMURA
BATTOSAI AT
THIS DOJO...?

...AND I'VE
HEARD OF
HIMURA-SAN
FROM THE
CHIEF.

I'M
LIEUTENANT
FUJITA.
I'VE BEEN
RECENTLY
ASSIGNED TO
THIS CITY...

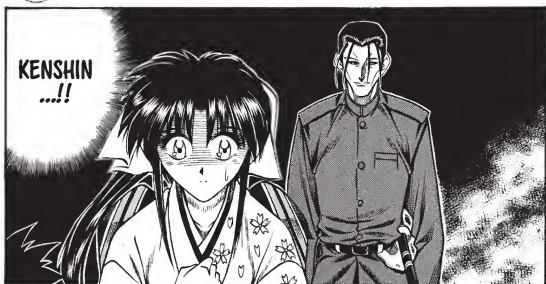
KENSHIN'S
NOT HOME
AT THE
MOMENT...

OH, SO
YOU'RE WITH
THE POLICE...

PHEW...

YES,
WELL...





The Secret Life of Characters (20) —Akamatsu Arundo—

**This character's here only to get beat up.
(Just thought I'd get that out of the way.)**

As a character created to aid in story development during the "Saitō Hajime" arc, not much personality found its way in here. (He did get arrogance—my favorite "villain" trait—though.) One thing I was particular about with Akamatsu was the chain-seythe, but despite all the effort I put into drawing it, I never could catch the look of real chains. That makes me a little sad.

In terms of design, many of you have probably already guessed—he's the superhuman soldier from a "certain American comic" (the "Akamatsu Arundo" name is similar to his). I tell myself sometimes that I should stop fooling around, but being stuck in a hectic situation as I am and never being allowed to have any fun...well, Watsuki ends up having to make his own fun, you know? "RuroKen" has been a series for a year now. I am going to try and be better... but, if I happen to slip now and again, tell yourself "Watsuki must be really tired and busy," will you? Thanks.

On an unrelated note, the toy-line I touched upon in Volume 2 (the palm-sized figures) finally numbers over 80—only four more to complete the collection! ...Wait, what am I doing?! I turned 25 this year. Time to grow up...right??



Act 51—Confrontation





I'LL TELL
YOU IN
DETAIL—
AT YOUR
GRAVE!!

CLICK!

YOU'RE
TO THE
LEFT,
BATTOSAI
...

HA! I
SEE
YOU!

VYOOO!!!



Act 51

Confrontation



IT'S BEEN
AWHILE SINCE
THIS ONE
WAS THERE.



WHAT
YOU
SAW...

...MUST
HAVE BEEN
THE AFTER-
IMAGE.



WH-H-H-Y
...

...YOU!!!





NKH!



HSS

KH!



.....
YOU'VE NO
CHANCE
OF
WINNING.

ENOUGH.

KLAN



READ
THIS
WAY



WHAT
CONNECTION
DO YOU
HAVE TO
SAITŌ?

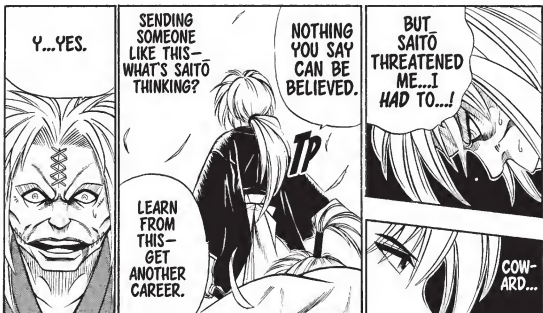
WHO
ARE
YOU?



FORGIVE
ME!

I DIDN'T
WANT TO
DO IT!

I'M SORRY!
I WAS
WRONG!



Y...YES.

SENDING
SOMEONE
LIKE THIS—
WHAT'S SAITŌ
THINKING?

NOTHING
YOU SAY
CAN BE
BELIEVED.

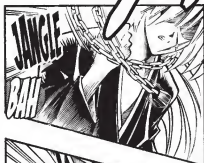
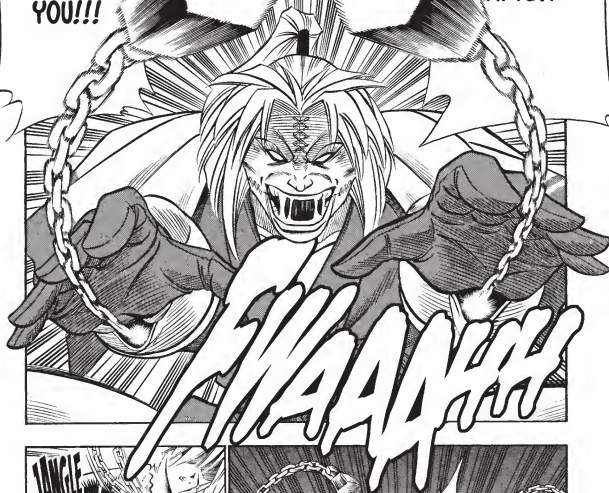
BUT
SAITŌ
THREATENED
ME...I
HAD TO...!

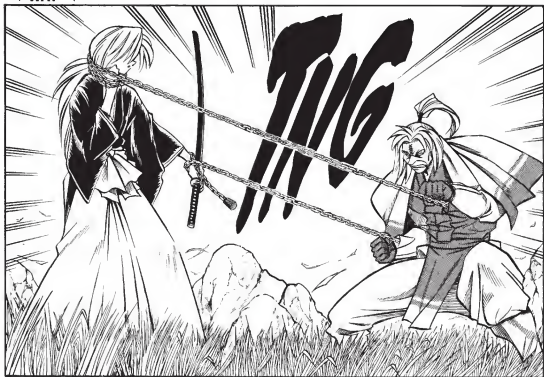
LEARN
FROM
THIS—
GET
ANOTHER
CAREER.

COW-
ARD...

-I
KILL
YOU!!!

RIGHT
AFTER-

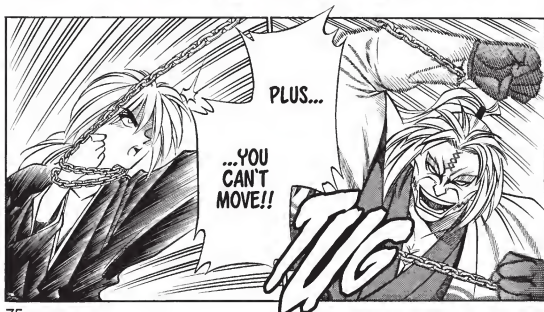




...BUT WHAT
NOW? BOTH
YOUR ARMS
ARE
USELESS.

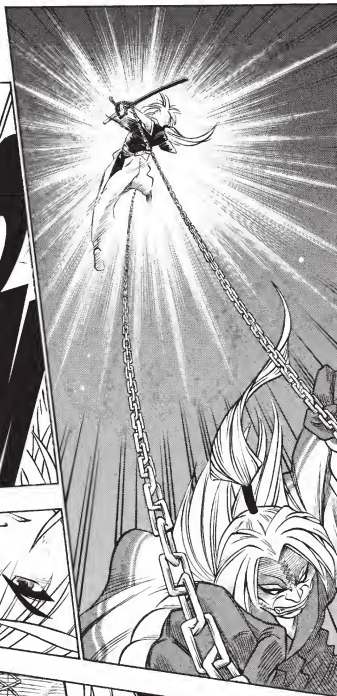


HEH. GOOD
MOVE TO KEEP
YOURSELF
FROM BEING
STRANGLER...





UH...



...BUT
I'M MORE
POWERFUL!

I
MAY BE
SLOWER
THAN
YOU...

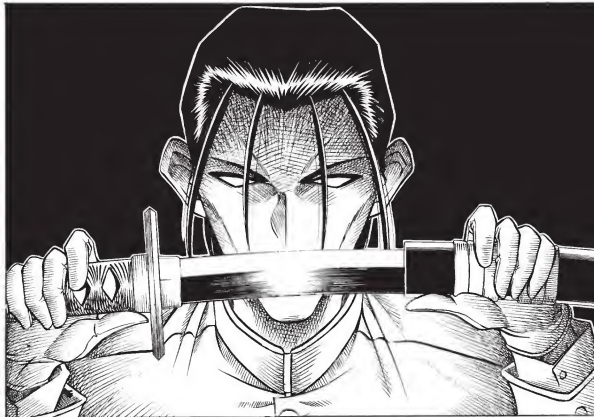
HEH



TRUE...

SO DON'T GO LOOKING FOR HIM YET. THE CHIEF DID ASSIGN THAT POLICE SWORDSMAN TO US.

IT'S DEFINITELY SAFER HERE THAN IT WOULD BE OUTSIDE.



THIS
KATANA
HAS NO
MATCH.



I BEAR
SPECIAL
PERMIS-
SION.

SABERS
ARE WEAK
AND UN-
RELIABLE.



WOW. I
THOUGHT
POLICEMEN
USED
ONLY
SABERS...

...BUT
THEY USE
KATANA,
TOO?



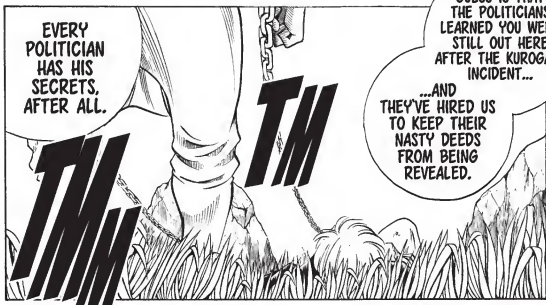
SAITŌ AND
I WERE
HIRED BY
JIN-E'S
CORPS OF
ASSASSINS.
WHY YOU?
WHO
KNOWS.

YOU'RE NOT
IN YOUR
GRAVE YET,
BUT I'LL
TELL YOU.

SIX
TIMES...
HE WAS
TOUGH.

HUH.
FINALLY
FINISHED.





EVERY
POLITICIAN
HAS HIS
SECRETS,
AFTER ALL.

MY
GUESS IS THAT
THE POLITICIANS
LEARNED YOU WERE
STILL OUT HERE
AFTER THE KUROGASA
INCIDENT...

...AND
THEY'VE HIRED US
TO KEEP THEIR
NASTY DEEDS
FROM BEING
REVEALED.



...AGAINST
THE OTHER
SHINSENGUMI,
TO KEEP
THEM IN
LINE.

IT'S
RUMORED
THAT SAITŌ
HAS OFTEN
TURNED
HIS
SWORD...

SO
THAT'S
IT.



THEY
WERE ALL...
DEFENSIVE
FALLS!



?!
GASP



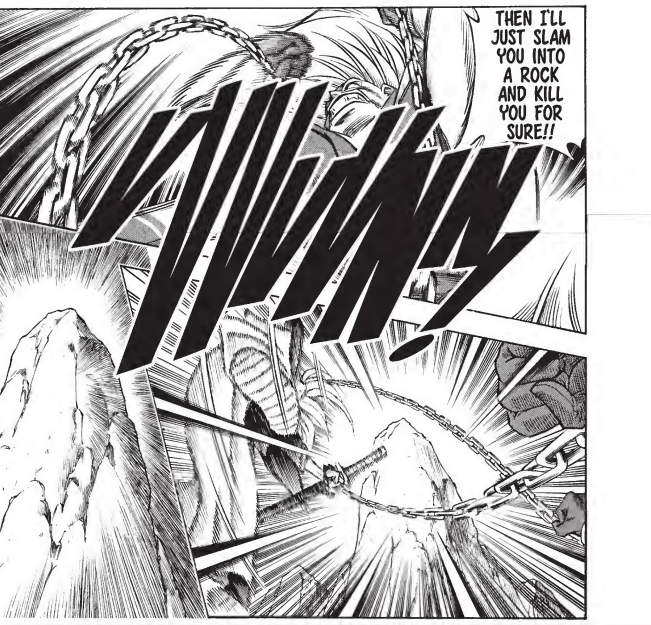
AH...

SAITŌ
HAJIME
IS AN
ASSASSIN
LIKE UDŌ
JIN-E...



...HE STILL
PLAYS AT
BEING AN
ASSASSIN.

SO
EVEN
NOW, IN
MEIJI...



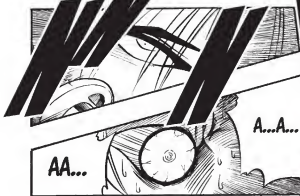
THEN I'LL
JUST SLAM
YOU INTO
A ROCK
AND KILL
YOU FOR
SURE!!



WHAT
?!

I-IN THIS
POSITION,
I CAN'T
USE MY
ARMS...!!

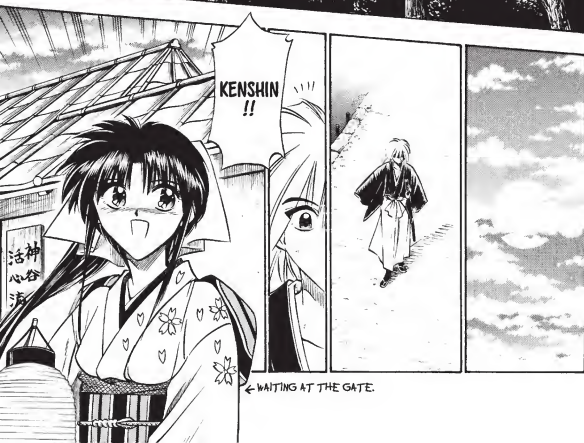
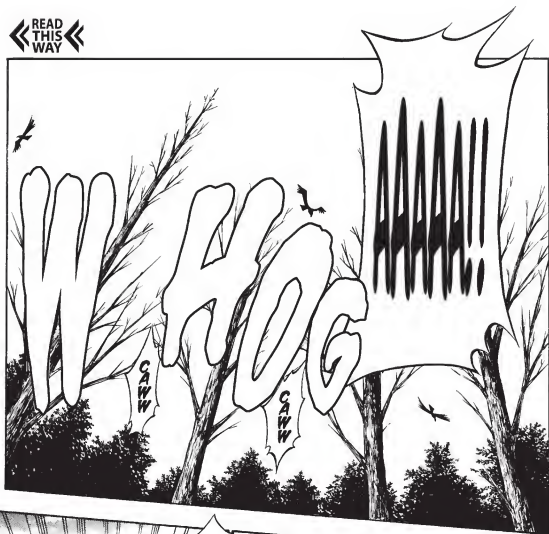
OH...!



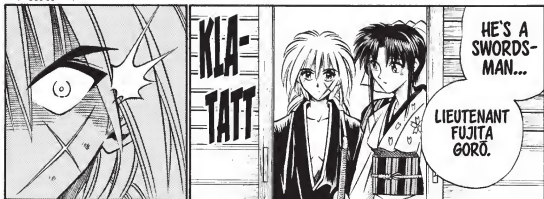
AA...

A...A...









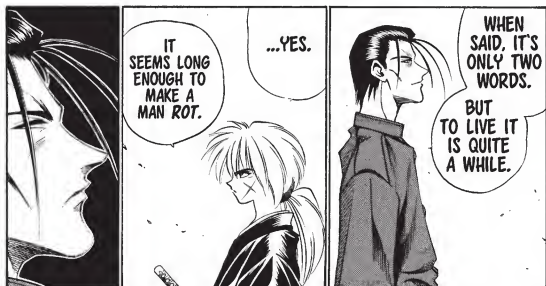
Rurouni Kenshin



Act 52—The Wolf's Fangs









THERE
WERE TWISTS
TO YOU THAT
COULDN'T BE
FATHOMED...

UDŌ
JIN-E WAS
CRAZY TO
BEGIN
WITH...

...BUT IN
BATTLE, YOU
WERE
HONORABLE
AND CAME
STRAIGHT
AT YOUR
OPPONENT.

...BUT
THAT
WASN'T
YOU.



...HUH.

HUH-
HUH-
HUH.

HUH-
HUH-
HA!



...HE
WAS A
MAN.

THE
SAITŌ
HAJIME
OF THE
PAST...



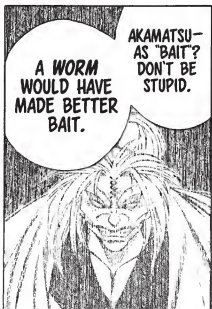
HURTING
YOUR
ENEMY BY
HURTING HIS
FRIEND...

USING
ANOTHER
WARRIOR AS
BAIT. TAKING
HOSTAGES. YOU
NEVER USED
TRICKS LIKE
THESE.



**HAHA
HAHA
HAHA
HAHA!**

**HAHA
HAHA
HAHA
HAHA!**





Long time no see. Watsuki here. This 52nd chapter was really tough. I had to go to Aomori for the J.S.A.T., but the schedule never seemed to get straightened out, and so I had to bring the work with me. Since I was unable to spend as much time on polish as I would have liked, there's maybe too much of my raw knowledge of and passion for the Shinsengumi in it, which maybe makes it harder to understand—it seems I just can't write good manga without that extra time. I've been hoping that a better-planned schedule would avoid this kind of thing, but then I ended up having to do a rough draft during a trip to my home town anyway. The 52nd chapter was written in spring, this comment was written in mid-summer, and the volume comes out [in Japan] in fall...no wonder manga artists lose track of their seasons...



THIS
RUROUNI
REFUSAL
TO KILL...

KENSIN
...?

...WEAK?

THINK
WHATEVER
YOU
WISH.

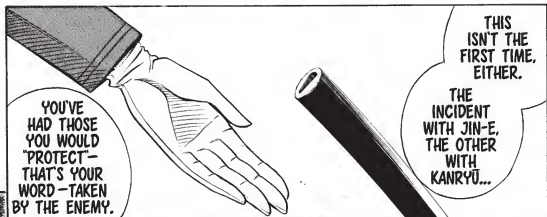
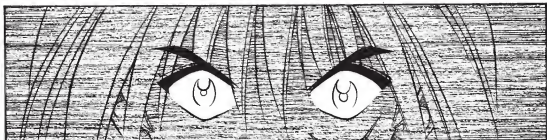
SAITŌ...

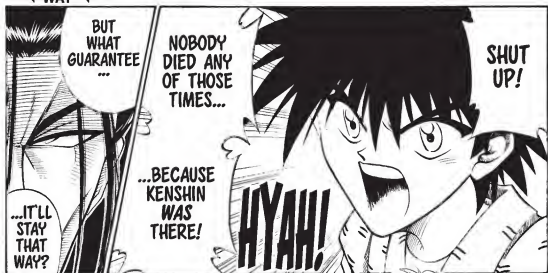
...CLEARLY,
IT'S MADE
YOU WEAK.

A
HITOKIRI'S
STRENGTH
TO KILL
ISN'T
NEEDED.

IT'S
ENOUGH TO
HAVE A
RUROUNI'S
STRENGTH TO
PROTECT
THOSE WHO
REQUIRE IT.









...IS LONG
ENOUGH
TO MAKE A
MAN ROT.

BUT, AS
YOU PUT
IT, TEN
YEARS...

READ
THIS
WAY

I THOUGHT
THE BATTOSAI
WOULD SEE
THIS...
...SO I SENT
AKAMATSU.

SEH

HOW CAN
HITOKIRI
BATTOSAI
PROTECT PEOPLE
WITHOUT
KILLING?



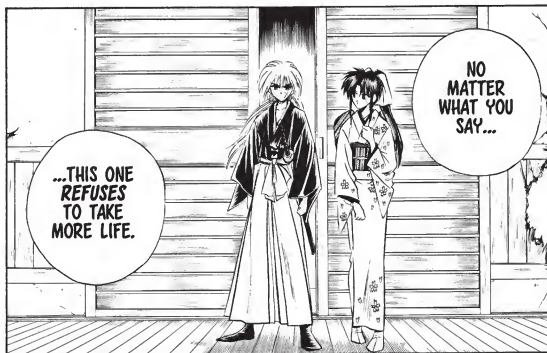
DROWNING
IN SELF-
SATISFACTION
AND PHONY
RIGHTEOUSNESS...



THAT WAS
THE CODE OF
JUSTICE
COMMON TO
BOTH THE
SHINSENGUMI,
AND TO THE
HITOKIRI.

"SWIFT
DEATH
TO
EVIL."

悪・即・斬
あく・そく・ざん



I WILL
DENY
EVERYTHING
THAT YOU
ARE.



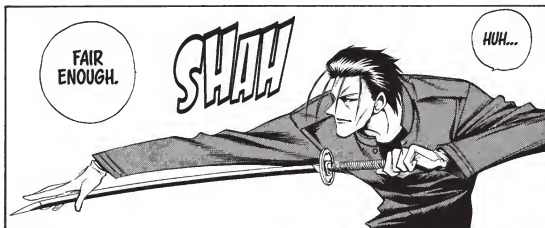
READ
THIS
WAY

WILL YOU
JUST STAND
THERE, AND
LET THE
GIRL BE
CAUGHT
IN THE
GATOTSU
?

WHAT'S
WRONG
?









I'LL
BEGIN
!!

DWN

RYŪTSUISEN!

HITEN
MITSU-
RUGI-
RYŪ!

HE'S
THE
STRONGEST
OF
ALL!

KENSHIN'S
NOT
'WEAK'!

DO YOU
THINK YOU
CAN DODGE
IT LIKE
THAT...

...BATTŌSAI
?!

HAH
HAH



THE "VOID"
GATOTSU!!

KW

!

KENSHIN!!!



KW



Act 53

Agreement

和伸
月宏

和伸
月宏





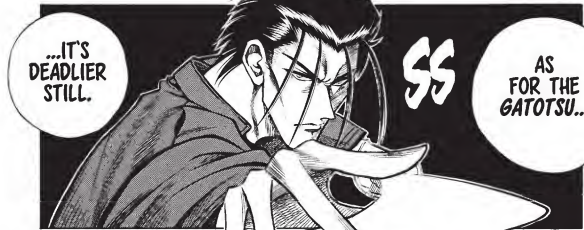
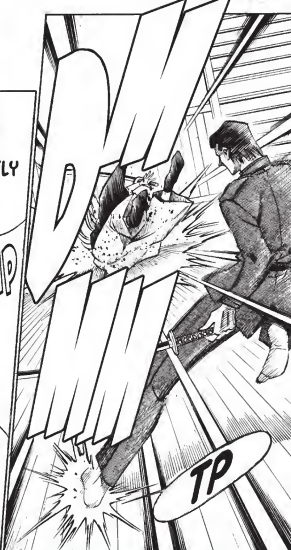




WHEN YOU
DODGE THE
THRUST, I
BEND INSTANTLY
INTO A
SLASH!

BLIP

IN
THE HIRAZUKI
DEVELOPED BY
THE TACTICAL
MASTER OF THE
SHINSENGUMI,
HIJIKATA TOSHIZO.
THERE IS NO
BLIND SPOT!



...IT'S
DEADLIER
STILL.

AS
FOR THE
GATOTSU...



HE'S
USING IT
AGAIN—!

THAT
FORM...



THE
SHINSENGUMI'S
STRENGTH
LIES NOT
IN THEIR
GROUP
TACTICS...

IN BATTLES
OF LIFE AND
DEATH, IT IS
RARE TO
MEET THE
SAME ENEMY
TWICE.



...BUT IN EACH
MEMBER'S
MASTERY OF
HIS OWN
DEADLIEST
BLOW.

THEREFORE,
IF ONE HAS
A SINGLE
ATTACK
CERTAIN TO
FINISH ONE'S
FOE, THERE IS
NO NEED
FOR LESSER
TECHNIQUES.



THE
SWORD...

WEAPON
BREAK!

KA-
KONG

**USELESS
EFFORT
!!**

...ARE
NO LONGER
EVEN KNOWN
TODAY.

THE SKILLS
THAT ENABLED
ME TO SURVIVE
COUNTLESS DUELS,
FROM THE
BAKUMATSU TO
THE MEIJI...



KEN
...



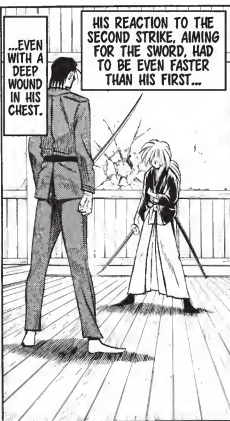
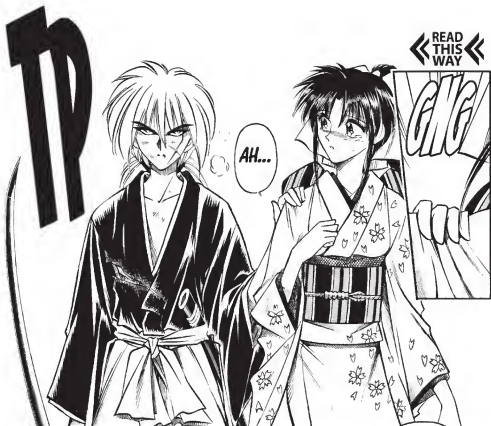
**KENSHIN
!**



**IT'S NO
GOOD.**

**HIS
STRENGTH
IS
BEYOND
US...**

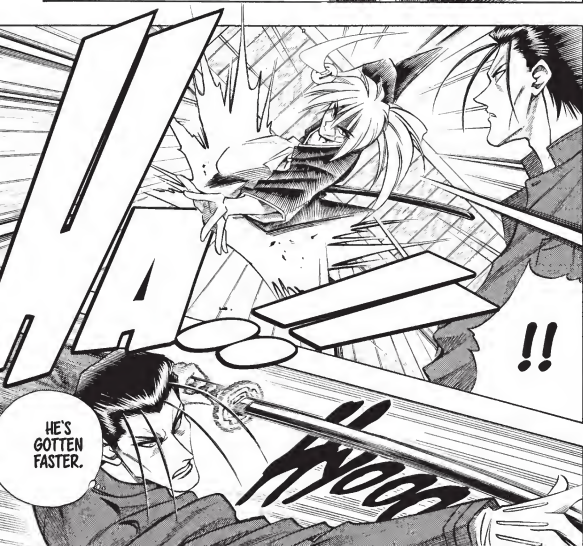




...HE RETURNS
TO HIMSELF...
TO THE
HITOKIRI
BATTOSAI!

EVERY
TIME HE
WIELDS A
SWORD, UN-
KNOWINGLY
BUT
INEXORABLY
...

IT'S
JUST
AS I
THOUGHT.



HE'S
GOTTEN
FASTER.





HIS
BREATHING'S
TOO HARSH.
HE'S HAVING
TO WORK
HARDER THAN
HE THOUGHT...

HF

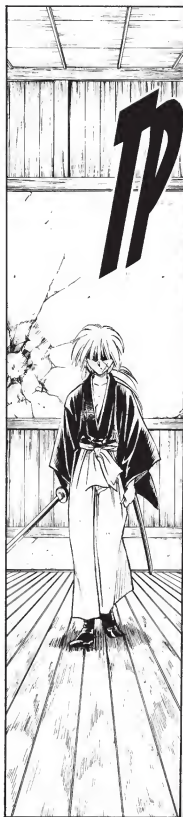
HF

HF



HIS SPEED...
WAS FAR
BEYOND MY
EXPECTATIONS.





COULD
IT
BE...?













GET UP,
SAITO.

HOWEVER
STRONG
GATOTSU MAY
BE, WHEN IT'S
SHOWN FOUR
TIMES IN A FEW
MINUTES...
...ANY IDIOT
CAN COME UP
WITH A FEW
WAYS TO
COUNTER IT.

TP



I
WILL
NOW
KILL
YOU.

MY ORDERS
ARE TO
EVALUATE
YOUR
STRENGTH.

HUH...

DM
M

BUT I
DON'T CARE
ABOUT THEM
NOW.

HUH-
HUH...

YOU KNOW
I'M THE ONE
WHO WILL
KILL YOU.

QUIT
POSING.



Rurouni Kenshin



**SOMEBODY
STOP
THEM—!!**



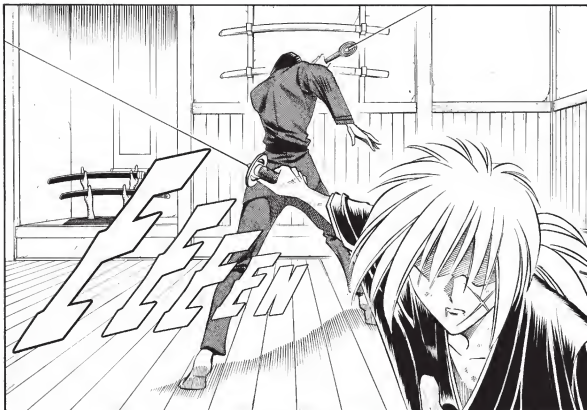
Act 54
The One Who Stops the Two



Act 54

The One Who Stops the Two





READ
THIS
WAY

DWAH?



THAT'S
HITOKIRI
BATTŌSAI!

THAT'S
NOT
KENSIN—



WHOA
...

KENSIN
LOOKS
OUT OF
HIS MIND!

YOU'RE
WRONG!!



I
DON'T
GET IT...

SHAKE
SHAKE



HE'S
BATTŌSAI
AGAIN!

THAT'S
NOT
GONNA
HAPPEN.



SOMEBODY
STOP
THEM!!

STOP
THEM!!







About the replies to your fan letters...recently they've started stacking up again. Sorry about that. Between getting the beginning of the volume colored, researching the Kyoto episode (this is a book requiring a lot of research to begin with, but these days, I'm about to lose it!) and, on top of that, moving our studio... Anyway, let's just say, when I'm lucky, I get a half-day's worth of rest—but if I use that half-day to reply to letters, I might do myself harm. Watsuki would like a LITTLE time to himself...truly, I'm very sorry, but please be patient.

As mentioned, we moved recently. The research materials that piled up, the fan letters that piled up, and the staff we had to hire to keep up with all the work made the old studio too small, so we bit the bullet and took the leap. Our new workplace is big and has a nice view, but it's also 20 years old. I guess maybe we should ready some emergency supplies, in case of an earthquake...



RIDING
SO HARD
THROUGH
THE MIDDLE
OF TOWN!

FEH!



822

822

Y...
YES...

ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT,
TSUBAME
?!



KYATA

KYATA

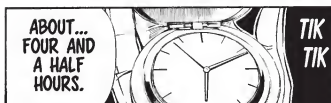
I DON'T
KNOW OR
CARE WHO
HE IS...

...BUT NO
ONE SHOULD
BE IN
THAT BIG A
HURRY...!



HOW LONG
HAS IT BEEN
SINCE SAITO
ENTERED THE
KAMIYA
DOJO?

YES?
WHAT
IS IT?



ABOUT...
FOUR AND
A HALF
HOURS.

TIK
TIK



KAWAJI-
KUN.





FLEEING
AN ENEMY
PROVES
YOUR
LACK OF
DETERMINA-
TION!!



YOU CHOOSE
YOUR
PRIDE AS
SHINSENGUMI
OVER YOUR
LIFE.
WORKS
FOR ME.



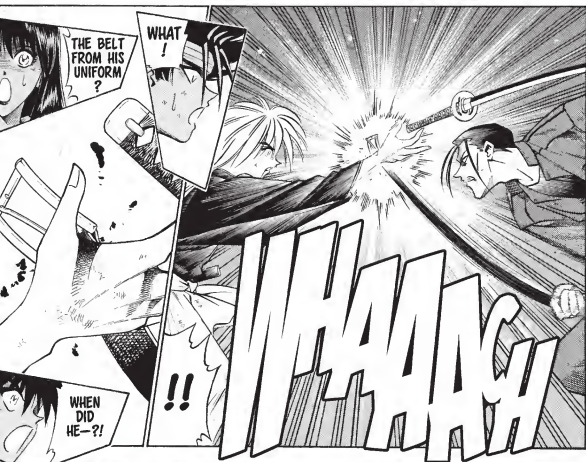
IF HE USED
HIS SWORD,
HE'D CREATE
AN AVENUE
FOR
ATTACK.

WITH
HIS
BARE
HANDS
—!

READ
THIS
WAY

EVEN THAT
MAN CAN'T
STOP KENSHIN'S
SWORD WITH
MARTIAL ARTS—

IT'S
OVER.





KENSHIN'S
GOT NO
CHANCE
WITHOUT A
SWORD...!

KEN-
SAN!!

HE'S GONNA
STRANGLE
HIM TO
DEATH!

HIS
THROAT
!

...IS THE
END!!



...HE'S
TRYING
TO BREAK
HIS
NECK.

NO...
NOTHING
SO
PASSIVE...

ACCEPT
YOUR
FATE!!

IT'S
USE-
LESS.

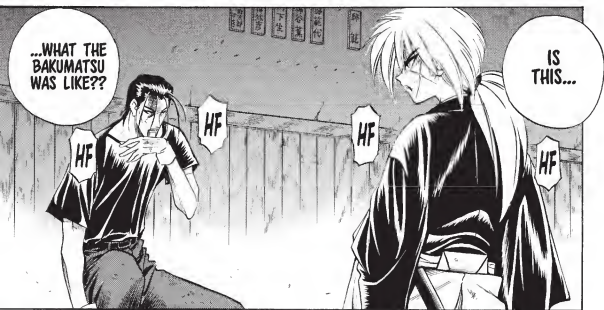
ddd

dd

HAHH!!

AK





THE NEXT
STRIKE
WILL BE
THE LAST.

NEITHER
OF THEM
HAS ANY
MORE
RESERVES.



UNLESS
THEY KILL
EACH
OTHER.

LIFE
OR
DEATH.



KEN...
SHIN...

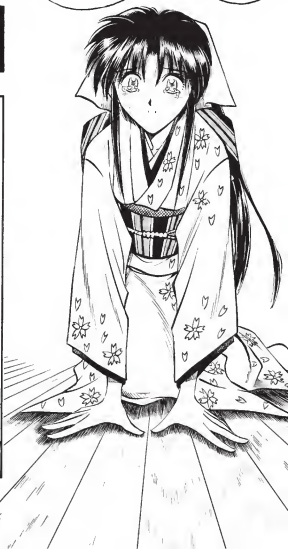


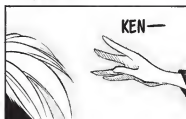
...WHY
NOT?

SHALL
WE...
FINISH
THIS
SOON?

CHIA

KRAAT







**STOP
THIS
!!**



I CANNOT
ALLOW EVEN
THE SUPER-
INTENDENT-
GENERAL TO
INTERFERE.

HEH

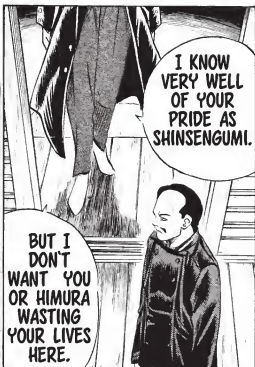
THIS
IS WHAT
I HAVE
LIVED
FOR.

YOUR
MISSION
WAS TO
EVALUATE
BATTŌSAI'S
STRENGTH
!!

**SNAP
OUT
OF IT,
SAITŌ
!!**



READ
THIS
WAY



I KNOW
VERY WELL
OF YOUR
PRIDE AS
SHINSENGUMI.

BUT I
DON'T
WANT YOU
OR HIMURA
WASTING
YOUR LIVES
HERE.

FORMER
WARRIOR OF
SATSUMA
PREFECTURE...



...I SEE. SO
YOU ARE THE
MAN BEHIND
SAITŌ HAJIME.

...ŌKUBO
TOSHIMICHI.

...NOW
CHIEF OF
INTERNAL
AFFAIRS FOR
THE MEIJI
GOVERNMENT...



Rurouni Kenshin



Act 55



THE LAST OF
THE THREE WHO
ACHIEVED THE
HIGHEST MERITS
IN THE
REVOLUTION.



A KID WHO
DOESN'T
READ THE
NEWS
WOULDN'T
KNOW.

NG!

WHO
THE HELL
IS THIS
MUSTACHE
GUY?!

THAT
DOESN'T
TELL ME
ANYTHING!



•THE OTHER TWO (SAIGŌ TAKAMORI AND KATSURA KOGORŌ) BOTH HAVE DIED BY THE 11TH YEAR OF MEIJI.

...THIS IS
THE MOST
POWERFUL
MAN IN
JAPAN.

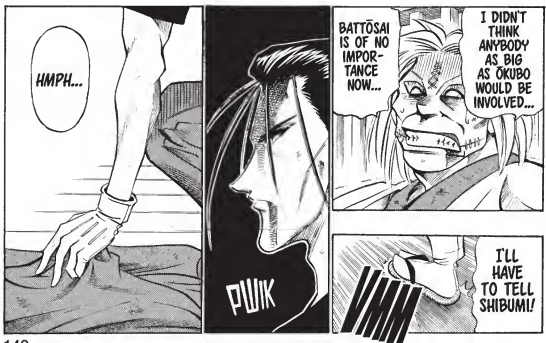
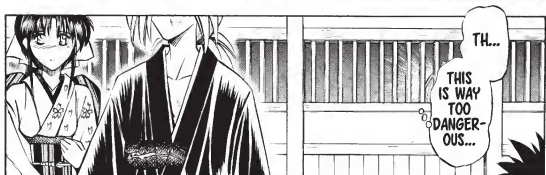
IN
OTHER
WORDS...

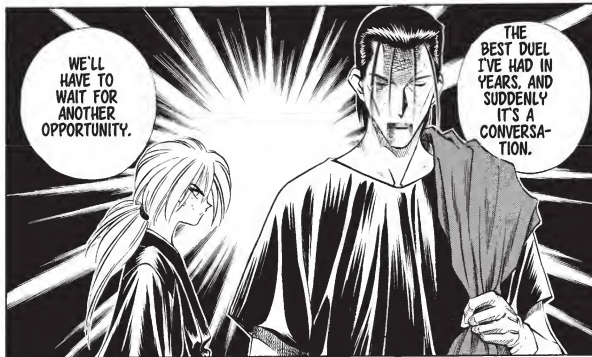
THE
CHIEF OF THE
DEPARTMENT
OF INTERNAL
AFFAIRS
CONTROLS
NATIONAL
POLICY.

OOH-
KAY...

Still
doesn't
get it.







WE'LL
HAVE TO
WAIT FOR
ANOTHER
OPPORTUNITY.

THE
BEST DUEL
I'VE HAD IN
YEARS, AND
SUDDENLY
IT'S A CONVER-
SATION.



YOU
ARE!



YOU'RE
LUCKY.



HE'S THE
BEST SPY
IN THE
POLICE
FORCE...

THAT
MAN...

...BUT I
NEVER KNOW
WHAT THAT
MIBU WOLF IS
THINKING.



HIMURA
KENSIN IS
USELESS.

BUT
HIMURA
BATTOSAI MAY
STILL HAVE
SOMETHING
TO OFFER.



MISSION
REPORT!

SAITŌ!



THIS
INCIDENT
HAS ALREADY
INVOLVED...

BLUP

BLUP

.....





I WON'T
WASTE
TIME WITH
DISCRETION.

I'LL
TELL YOU
STRAIGHT
OUT.

HIMURA...



...SHISHIO
PLOTS
AGAIN.

IN
KYOTO...



SHISHIO
MAKOTO.



HEY,
WATCH YOUR
MOUTH!!

JAB

THAT'S
STRAIGHT
OUT?!

WHO
THE HELL'S
SHISHIO
?!





BATTŌSAI'S

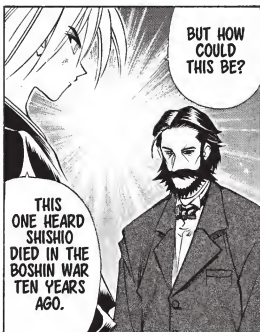
...

...SUCCESSOR
...?

MM...HE
WORKED IN
THE SHADOWS
AND IS ALMOST
COMPLETELY
UNKNOWN.

EVEN THIS
ONE HAD NO
DIRECT
CONTACT
WITH HIM.

I'VE
NEVER
HEARD
OF HIM!



BUT HOW
COULD
THIS BE?

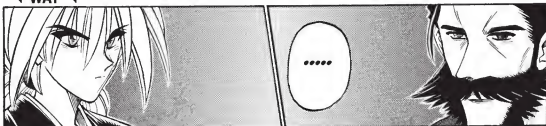
THIS
ONE HEARD
SHISHIO
DIED IN THE
BOSHIN WAR
TEN YEARS
AGO.



ONCE THIS
ONE EMERGED
FROM THE
SHADOWS TO
FIGHT AS A
"FREE-STRIKING
SWORDSMAN"
AGAINST THE
SHINSENGUMI
AND ITS
ALLIES...

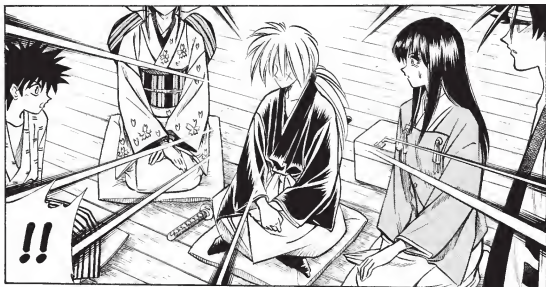
...SHISHIO
MAKOTO,
ANOTHER
CHŌSHŪ
REVOLUTIONARY,
LIVED THE
ROLE OF THE
"HITOKIRI OF
THE SHADOWS."

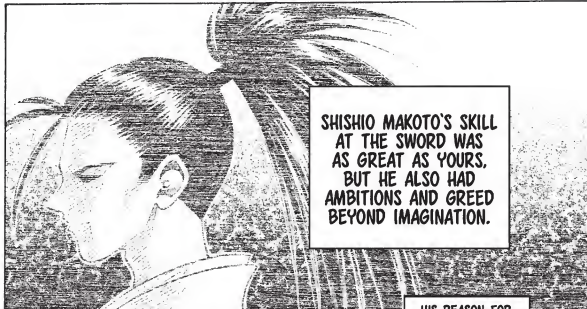
IN OTHER
WORDS,
HE'S THE
SUCCESSOR
TO
"HITOKIRI
BATTŌSAI."



HE WAS
ERASED
BY HIS
COMRADES.

AH...SO HE
DIDN'T DIE,
AFTER ALL.





SHISHIO MAKOTO'S SKILL
AT THE SWORD WAS
AS GREAT AS YOURS.
BUT HE ALSO HAD
AMBITIONS AND GREED
BEYOND IMAGINATION.

...UNLIKE YOU, WHO
WISHED ONLY TO
FIGHT FOR YOUR
COMRADES, AND
FOR THE WEAK.



HIS REASON FOR
TAKING ON THE TASK
OF HITOKIRI WAS
ONLY TO LET THE
REVOLUTIONARY
OFFICERS
FEEL HIS POWER
AND PRESENCE...

...HE COULD
USE THAT
VULNERABILITY
TO GET HIS
HANDS AROUND
THE NATION'S
THROAT.



IF WE
ENTERED
THE NEW
AGE WITH
SHISHIO
ALIVE...

IF SO,
THE MEIJI
GOVERNMENT
WOULD BE
TURNED ON
ITS HEAD.

SOME OF THE
ASSASSINATIONS
SHISHIO
COMMITTED
CAN NEVER BE
REVEALED...

...WASN'T
HE?



SO HE
WAS KILLED
IN THE
CHAOS OF
THE BOSHIN
WAR...



WE EVEN
HAD OIL POURED
ON HIM AND
THE BODY
BURNED.

YES. WE
KILLED
HIM, WE
THOUGHT.



...SHISHIO
MAKOTO
SURVIVED.

BUT EVEN
WITH HIS
BODY
ENGULFED
IN FLAMES...

...MAKING THE
DARK STREETS
OF KYOTO HIS
BASE, PLOTTING
TO TRIGGER
A WAR OF
VENGEANCE
SPLITTING THIS
COUNTRY IN
TWO...SPLIT WITH
THE SECRETS
OF HIS
ASSASSINATIONS.

AND NOW,
HE'S GATHERED
MANY BATTLE-
MONGERS WHO
 CRAVE BLOOD
AND FLESH,
AND WEAPON-
MERCHANTS
WHO HATE THE
PEACEFUL TIMES,
CREATING A
LARGE ARMY OF
SOLDIERS...

YOU ARE
OUR LAST
HOPE.

THE MANY
TROOPS WE SENT
HAVE ALL BEEN
ANNIHILATED.

PLEASE
GO TO
KYOTO ONCE
AGAIN.

FOR THE
PEOPLE
OF THIS
COUNTRY,
HIMURA...



...KENSIN
TO
ASSASSINATE
SHISHIO
MAKOTO?

DOES
THAT
MEAN YOU
WANT...



WE'LL
REWARD YOU
GENEROUSLY
AND TAKE
CARE OF
YOUR
ALLIES.



OF COURSE,
WE DON'T
EXPECT...
...THAT
YOU'LL
WORK FOR
FREE.

...PARDONING
TAKANI MEGUMI
OF THE CRIME
OF SELLING
OPIUM.



SUCH
AS...

...TO
PUT IT
BLUNTLY,
YES.





IF I AM
TO BE AN
INGREDIENT
IN SOME DEAL
CAUSING KENSHIN
TROUBLE...

...I'LL
TAKE THE
HANGMAN'S
NOOSE!



DON'T
YOU TOY
WITH
ME.



I CAN'T
JUST SIT
BY WHILE
YOU DRAG
HIM INTO
YOUR
FILTH!

HE CHOSE
THE LIFE OF
A RURONI.
FORBIDDING
HIMSELF TO
KILL.

THIS
WHOLE
THING IS
BECAUSE
OF THE MEIJI
GOVERNMENT'S
DIRTY
DEEDS.

WHY
SHOULD
KENSHIN
WIPE YOUR
BUTTS...?



THE
EXISTENCE
OF THE
MEIJI
GOVERNMENT
RIDES ON
THIS!

SHUT
YOUR
MOUTH.
YOU
IGNORANT
PUNK!

THEN
MAYBE
YOUR DIRTY
GOVERNMENT
SHOULD
FALL!

WHAT
HAVE YOU
DONE
FOR THE
PEOPLE,
ANYWAY?!





SO
JUST
TRY IT,
FATHEAD
!!

SOMEDAY
YOU'LL FIND
OUT THE
PEOPLE DON'T
NEED YOUR
GOVERNMENT
!!

WITHOUT
THE MEIJI
GOVERNMENT,
THERE CAN
BE NO PEACE
IN THE LAND,
FOOL!

AND KEEP
BARKING
AND I'LL
HAVE YOU
ON A
LEASH!

CRAB

GUESS THIS
KID
CAN'T GET
IT.

PICK



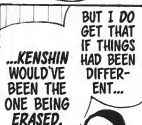
PICK

ALL
THIS TALK
ABOUT
MEIJI
AND
GOVERNMENT...



LORD
OKUBO.

ALL YOU
CARE ABOUT
ASSASSINATIONS
IS IF THEY
BENEFIT YOU
OR NOT.



BUT I DO
GET THAT
IF THINGS
HAD BEEN
DIFFER-
ENT...

...KENSIN
WOULD'VE
BEEN THE
ONE BEING
ERASED.



BUT
KENSIN
IS NO
LONGER
HITOKIRI.

I
UNDERSTAND
THAT YOU
NEED
"HITOKIRI
BATTOSAI"
TO HELP
YOU.



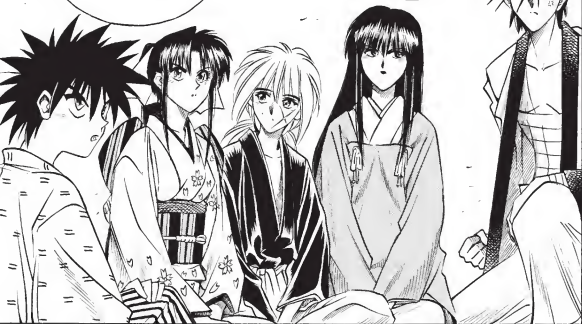
ME, I'D
NEVER
GET
MIXED UP
WITH
YOU.



PICK
PICK

...ALLOW
KENSHIN
TO LEAVE
FOR
KYOTO.

WE
WILL
NEVER...



A
WEEK FROM
NOW, ON
THE WESTERN
"MAY 14TH"...

PLEASE
THINK
ABOUT IT
OVER THE
WEEK.



IDIOTS!
DON'T YOU
REALIZE
HOW
SERIOUS
THIS—!

STOP,
KAWAJI.

...I WILL
COME BACK
TO HEAR
YOUR
ANSWER.

WE CAN'T
EXPECT AN
ANSWER TO
SUCH A
SITUATION
RIGHT AWAY.

LORD
OKUBO
...?







ÔKUBO, OR WHOEVER
IT MAY BE...IF HE WILL
DROWN IN HIS OWN
GREED AND BRING
MISFORTUNE TO THE
PEOPLE OF THIS
COUNTRY...



...THEN
HE, TOO,
SHALL MEET
THE "SWIFT
DEATH TO
EVIL."

THE REASON
I SERVE THE
GOVERNMENT,
AS FORMER
SHINSENGUMI
WHO SPIES
FOR HIS
CONQUERORS...

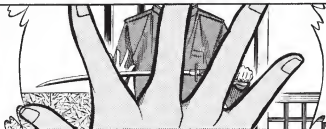
...IS TO
RID MEIJI OF
THE BLOOD-
SUCKING TICKS
WHO FEED
ON IT.



...BUT PEOPLE
FROM THE OLD
GOVERNMENT
ALSO PUT OUR
LIVES ON THE
LINE. AS THE
"DEFEATED,"
WE'VE
CONTRIBUTED,
TOO.



I'LL
GIVE YOU
MONEY!
I'LL—!



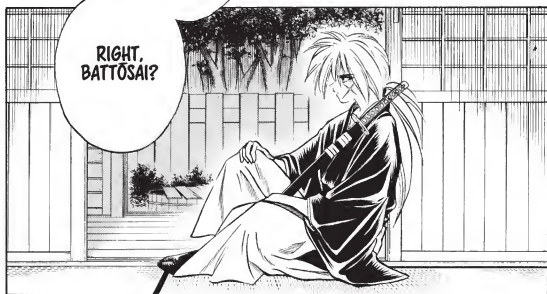
W-
WAIT A
MINUTE!

...THAT,
NONE
MAY
DO.

...BUT
TAMING A
WOLF OF
MIBU...

ONE MAY
TAME A
DOG WITH
FOOD...
...OR
TAME
A MAN
WITH
MONEY...





The Secret Life of Characters (21) —Saitō Hajime (Fujita Gorō)—

Model, schmodel.... Saitō's a real, historical figure. That being said—unlike Sagara Sōzō or Yamagata Arimoto—he'll have a *lot* to do with the storyline, so I've altered him to suit my own needs. I've altered him so much, in fact, that I've received letters of complaint from Shinsengumi fans. (I've had complaints before, sure, but never this many!) As the story's gone on, though, the popularity of the character has also increased, so I'm happy. Saitō's a character who's currently active, and I don't want to give too much away, but in the distant future, what I'd like is for him to become a "dirty" hero, sticking always with his "Swift Death to Evil" philosophy, never ever becoming a "nice guy" or becoming palsy-walsy with Kenshin and the gang.

No model in terms of design. Originally he appeared as an antagonist, so I made his face "villain-ish," but there were complaints. Shinsengumi fans, it seems, persist in thinking of Saitō as very handsome...despite the fact that not a single photo of him exists. (There are portraits, but if you think *that's* handsome...well, your mileage may vary, okay?) Speaking of complaints, there was one to the effect of, "Why is Saitō selling 'Ishida powdered medicine' made by the Hijikata family?" Fine, fine—that was just me, fooling around. I'll take the heat for some stuff (like Akamatsu), but when people start complaining about stuff like *that*...come on, now. Even a manga artist is human. Can't you Shinsengumi fans read this manga with a more open mind...? No...?

Gatotsu ("Fang Thrust") isn't a real move. Saitō Hajime's favorite move historically was the "left single-handed thrust," so I gave it the name "*gatotsu*" to better fit in with the whole action-manga thing. It is true, though, that the Shinsengumi used the *Hiratsuki* ("Parallel Thrust").



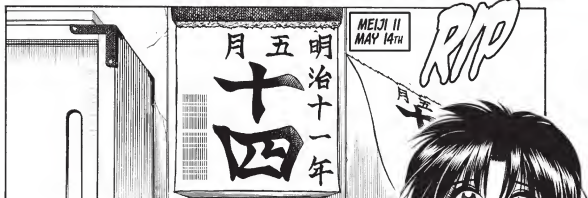
Act 56
Meiji 11,
May
14th—
Morning

あらうに剣心
緋村剣心



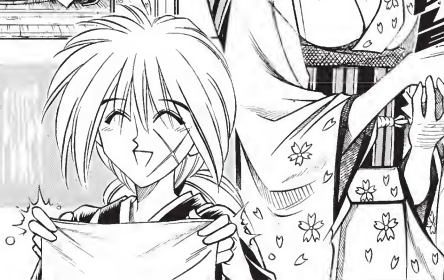
...I WILL
COME BACK
TO HEAR
YOUR
ANSWER.

A WEEK
FROM NOW,
ON THE
WESTERN
"MAY 14TH"...



PERFECT!

WHITE
AS
SNOW!



◀ READ
THIS WAY ▶

IT
SEEMED
THE
END WAS
NEAR...

.....!!

THIS IS
NO TIME TO
BE DOING
LAUNDRY!
WHAT ARE
YOU GONNA
SAY?!

HEY.

SANO, YOU
HATE THE
MEIJI GOVERN-
MENT FROM THE
BOTTOM
OF YOUR
HEART, DON'T
YOU.

DON'T
DO IT.
SOMETHING
SMELLS
BAD.

IF THE
GOVERNMENT
ITSELF STINKS,
DON'T EXPECT
THE MAN AT THE
TOP TO
SMELL OF
FLOWERS.

...BUT
I'M STILL
AFRAID YOU'RE
GOING TO
LISTEN TO
OKUBO.

I
KNOW YOU
PROBABLY
WON'T...

COURSE

GRIND

SHOULDN'T
I?!

GRIND

I'M
SEIWHŌ
ARMY!





"AND EVEN
IN THE
DARKNESS,
HIS FANGS
GLOW WITH
'SWIFT
DEATH TO
EVIL'..."

"THAT
MAN IS
STILL A
WOLF OF
MIBU..."



I
HATES
HIM!!

YOU
SAID
IT!!

DUH!!

...MEANING, HE'S
NOT SOMEONE
WE'D BE
FRIENDS WITH.



THEY
SAY
WE
SNEEZE
...

FOUR
OF 'EM!

...WHEN
SOMEONE
SPEAKS
ILL OF US.

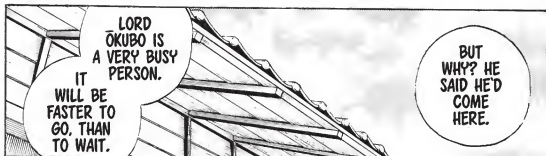


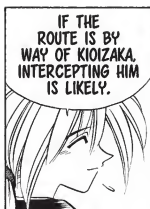
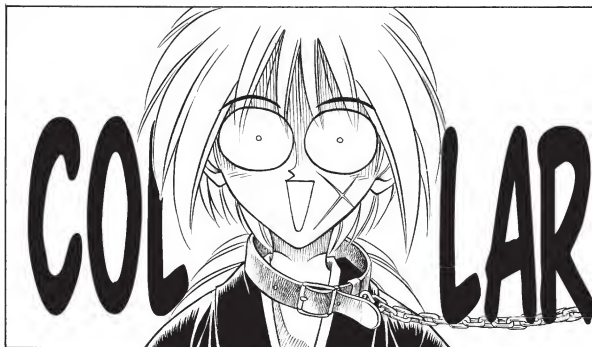
PARDON
ME.

OH,
FUJITA-
SAN...
YUCK.





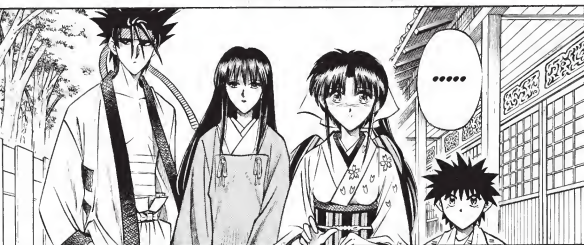






IT
WILL BE A
COMPLICATED
CONVERSATION.
IT'S BETTER TO
BE ALONE.

...NO.



.....

...AND
JUST GO
OFF TO
KYOTO.

DONT
WORRY.
KENSIN
WONT
LEAVE YOU
HERE...



MAYBE
...

STILL...IF LORD
OKUBO'S STORY IS
TRUE, I KNOW
KENSIN WON'T BE
ABLE TO JUST LEAVE
SHISHIO MAKOTO
ALONE.

SURE.
KENSIN
ISN'T
ABOUT TO
ASSASSINATE
ANYBODY.

AND WHAT
KENSIN WON'T
DO...HITOKIRI
BATTOSAI
WILL.

AND
EVEN IF
HE WAS
GOING
TO...

...I
WOULDN'T
LET HIM.

KENSIN...

—KIOIZAKA—
THE FIRST CHARACTER
FROM EACH OF THE
THREE FAMILIES WHO
LIVED HERE BEFORE
THE REVOLUTION —
KISHŪ, BISHŌ, AND I'I—
FORMS THE NAME OF
THIS SLOPE."

ALL POWERFUL
LORDS, THEIR
MANSIONS
RANKED SIDE-
BY-SIDE. THE
AREA, PAST AND
PRESENT, IS A
PRIME LOCATION
IN TOKYO.

—THE 'BI' IN 'BISHŪ' CAN ALSO BE READ AS THE 'O' IN 'KIOIZAKA'—ED.

...THIS DAY, ON
THE MORNING OF
MAY 14TH, IN THE
11TH YEAR OF MEIJI,
TRAVELS ITS SLOPE
IN A CARRIAGE...

THE MAN
WHO STANDS
AT THE TOP OF
THE MEIJI
GOVERNMENT,
THE CHIEF OF
INTERNAL
AFFAIRS, OKUBO
TOSHIMICHI...



NO
NEED TO
WORRY ABOUT
THE FUTURE
OF THE
NATION...

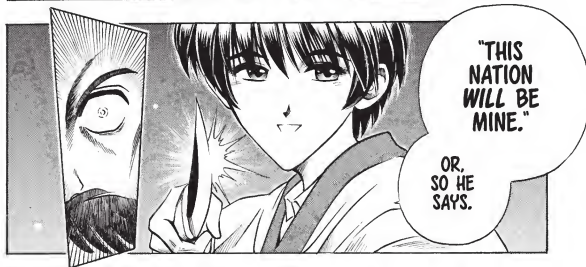
...NOT
IF YOU'RE
GOING TO
BE DEAD!

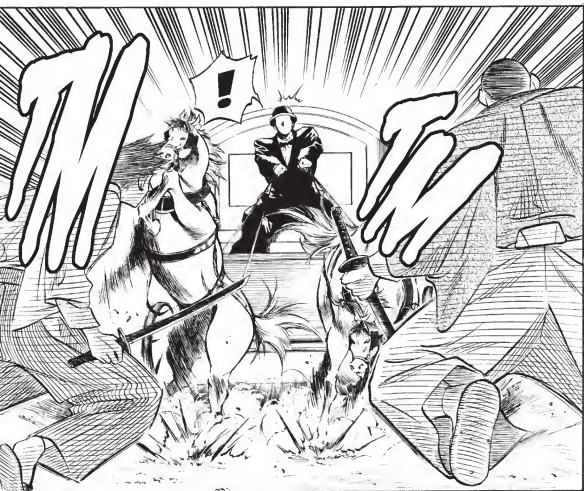
WEE



WHAT
...!

HEH

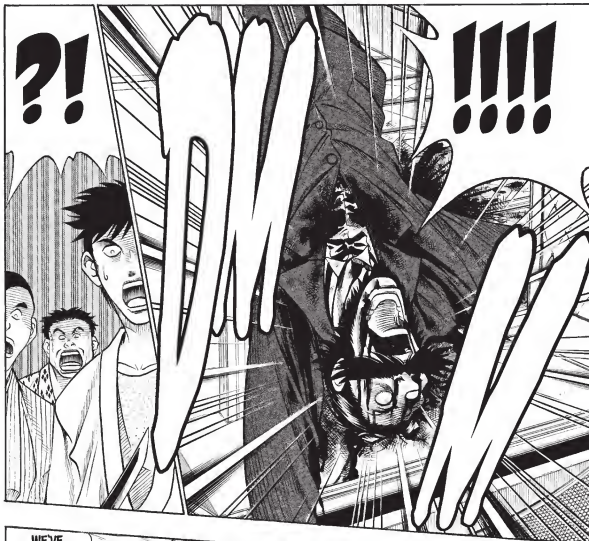




AND CHŪ
TSURAHIDE,
ŌKUBO—
PREPARE
TO DIE!!

SHIMADA
ICHIRO,
SAMURAI OF
ISHIKAWA
PREFECTURE.





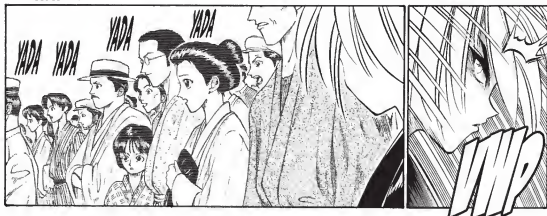


MAY 14TH,
THE 11TH YEAR
OF MEIJI.
THE "KIOIZAKA
INCIDENT."

...IS CLAIMED
BY A GROUP
OF SEVEN
ASSASSINS
COMPRISED
MAINLY OF
ISHIKAWA
PREFECTURE
SAMURAI
UNHAPPY
WITH MEIJI.

THE MAN AT
THE TOP OF
THE MEIJI HEAP,
ASSASSINATED
IN BROAD
DAYLIGHT. THIS
INCIDENT, WHICH
WILL REMAIN
IN JAPANESE
HISTORY
FOREVER...





The Secret Life of Characters (22) —Ōkubo Toshimichi—

Another historical personage—one of the three greatest revolutionaries. As with other real-life characters, I drew him to suit my own needs.

Ōkubo is well-known as a good friend of Saigō Takamori, but possibly because of the bias Japanese people have toward Saigō, Ōkubo is thought to be a sly, cunning man...and Watsuki finds himself disappointed by this. It is true that, during the Bakumatsu, Ōkubo had been the strategist but, after the revolution, he was very ethical, never enriching himself personally through politics (Saigō was sent off to his death because of it). Ōkubo is a great example of what a politician should be, if you ask Watsuki.

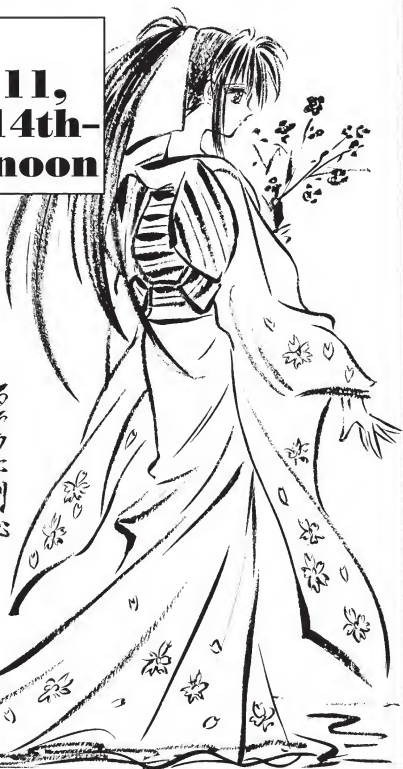
After his assassination at Kioizaka, Ōkubo's estate was audited and everyone was curious to know just how rich the richest man in Japan had been. As it turned out, he had only 500 yen in cash [in current terms, about \$200,000] and, on top of that, was 6,000 yen in debt [about \$2.4 million] because of loans taken out to cover government shortfalls. During a time when many politicians conspired with the wealthy to enrich their own personal fortunes, Ōkubo was probably the most honest of them all...and still he was dubbed "Saigō's murderer" and was hated by the people of his home prefecture, who refused to allow his remains to be interred there. It wasn't until the Meiji period that Ōkubo was even acknowledged by his people...that's right, the man who gave up everything in order to help Japan flourish wasn't allowed to go home for over 100 years. Ōkubo Toshimichi is definitely someone who deserves to be shown a little more love, if you ask me.

For a design, I'd originally wanted to look over his portrait photos, but was unable to find them. I drew him instead from the photo of a statue... but it turned out to be not similar at all. I notice when I look back now that he resembles President Lincoln (another man I like). That must have found its way in there, somehow...



Act 57
Meiji 11,
May 14th-
Afternoon

るちうに剣心
神谷薫



**EXTRA!
EXTRA!**

**MAY 14TH,
11TH YEAR OF
MEIJI,
AFTERNOON.**

**CHIEF OF
INTERNAL
AFFAIRS
ASSASSINATED!**

**LORD
OKUBO
ASSASSINATED!!**

**NEWS OF THE
"KIOIZAKA
INCIDENT" HAS
TRAVELED
AROUND TOKYO
WITHIN THE
DAY LIKE A
RIPPLE IN
THE WATER.**





THESE
ARE THE
METHODS
OF
SHISHIO!!



NEVER
REVEALING
HIMSELF...

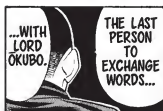
...CHISELING
AWAY AT
THE MEIJI
GOVERNMENT
UNTIL THE
DAY THEY
REVOLT...

HE PLANTS
SPIES
THROUGHOUT
THE NATION
AND USES
THEIR
DISCOVERIES
TO COMMIT
CRIMES.



LORD
ŌKUBO...

.....



**NOT
NOT**



THE PAST
TEN WERE
THE YEARS
OF
"CREATION."

I BELIEVE THE
FOUNDATION
OF A NATION
TAKES 30
YEARS.

BUT IT
STARTS
FROM
HERE.

NOW POLITICS AND
IDEAS UNITE. NOW
IS THE MOST
IMPORTANT
PERIOD.

THE NEXT
TEN ARE
THE YEARS
OF
"GROWTH."

...AND THE
REVOLUTION
WILL BE
TRULY
COMPLETE.

SO JAPAN
WILL BE
REBORN AS
A "NATION
STATE"...

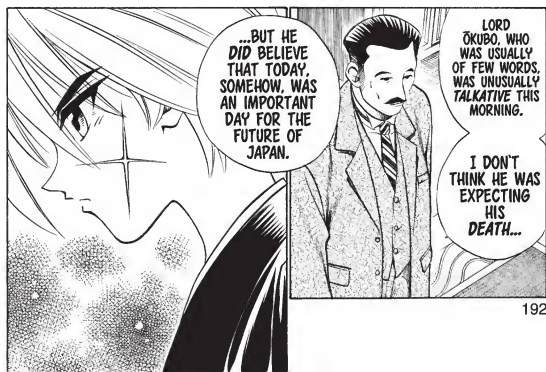
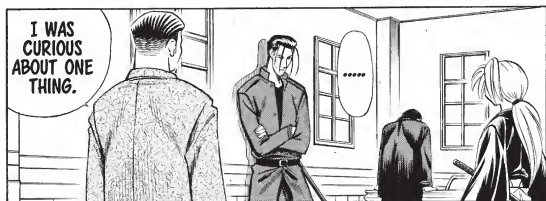
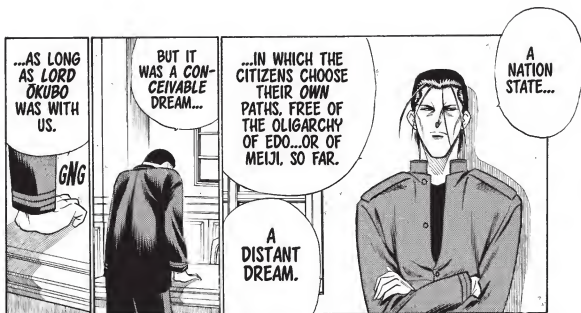
...TO
GUIDE US
THROUGH
THIS
SECOND
PERIOD.

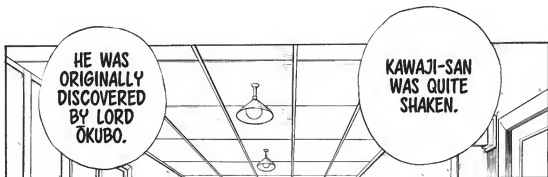
THOUGH
UNWORTHY,
I HOPE I
MAY BE
ALLOWED...

SIRAP

...TO THOSE
WHO WILL
LEAD US INTO
BECOMING A
TRUE
REPUBLIC.

FINALLY,
THE YEARS OF
"MAINTENANCE."
I LEAVE TO
THE MINDS
OF THE
FUTURE.

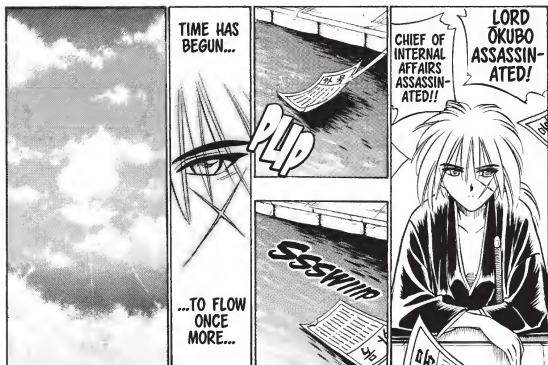




Let's end this on a lighter note—and talk about games! Watsuki finally got his PlayStation. He also got a Sega Saturn. (W-san and friends, thank you for that! Please come and hang out again.) Sadly, though, I haven't been able to use either system—they've turned into the assistants' gaming machines! I haven't got the time... (Dear, oh dear. So much for the "lighter note"! I'm definitely going to play "Vampire" and "V.F. 2," though! I'm also going to master "(Shin) Samurai Spirits," even if I'm nowhere near there yet. (Only to the extent it won't affect "Ruroken," naturally.) See you next volume!

和伸
月宏



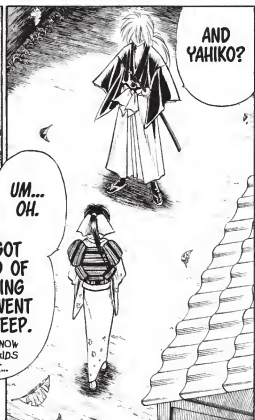
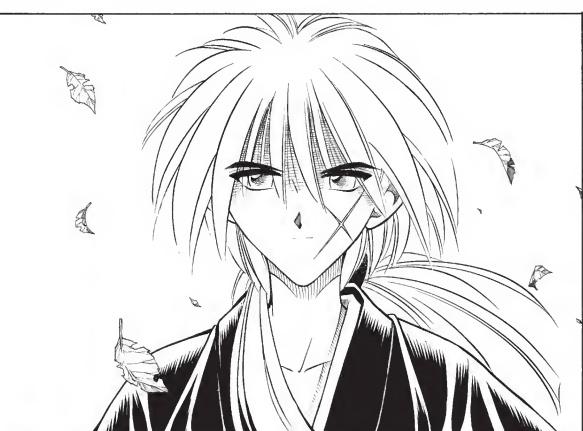


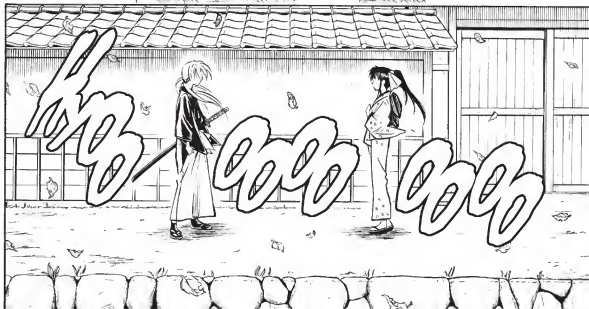


...FEH! AN
EMERGENCY.
ON A NIGHT
LIKE THIS!









READ
THIS
WAY



NO...

...MAYBE
SO.



BUT IF
THIS ONE
BECOMES
BATTŌSAI
AGAIN, AS IN
THE BATTLE
AGAINST
SAITŌ...

IF THIS
ONE CAN
REMAIN
RURŌUNI...

...IT WILL
BE ENOUGH
TO MEET AND
TALK WITH
HIM—TO
DEFEAT HIM,
IF NEEDED.



SHISHIO
MAKOTO...

...WILL YOU
ASSASSINATE
HIM, THEN?



BUT
AS IT WAS
SHOWN IN
THE BATTLE
AGAINST
SAITŌ...

DURING THE
TIME SPENT
HERE, IT
SEEMED LIFE
AS A NORMAL
SWORDSMAN
WAS
POSSIBLE.

DAYS
WERE SPENT
WITH PEACE
IN THE
HEART.

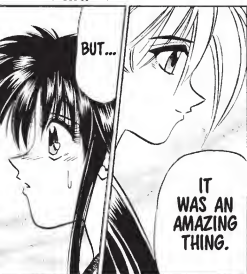


...DEEP
IN THIS ONE'S
HEART, THERE
CAN BE NO
DOUBT...

...THE
HITOKIRI
STILL
LIVES.



"TIME HAS BEGUN TO FLOW, ONCE MORE..."



BUT...

IT
WAS AN
AMAZING
THING.



...YOU
UNDERSTOOD,
EVEN AFTER
FINDING
OUT ABOUT
HITOKIRI
BATTOSAI.

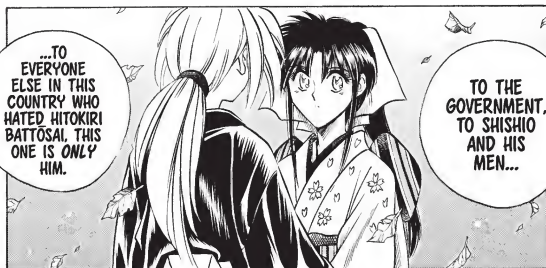
"I DON'T
CARE ABOUT
PEOPLE'S
PASTS." YOU
SAID.

WHEN
WE
FIRST
MET...

"...AND BATTOSAI
WILL BECOME
CLOSER EACH
TIME."

"...EACH INCIDENT
WILL INVOLVE KAORU
AND THE OTHERS...

"IF THIS
ONE STAYS ANY
LONGER..."



...TO
EVERYONE
ELSE IN THIS
COUNTRY WHO
HATED HITOKIRI
BATTOSAI, THIS
ONE IS ONLY
HIM.

TO THE
GOVERNMENT,
TO SHISHIO
AND HIS
MEN...

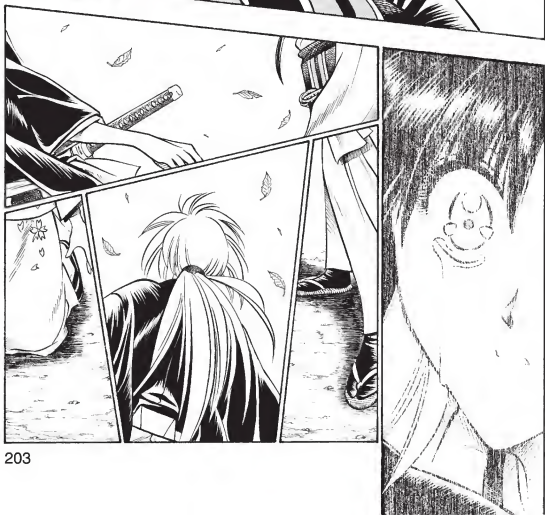
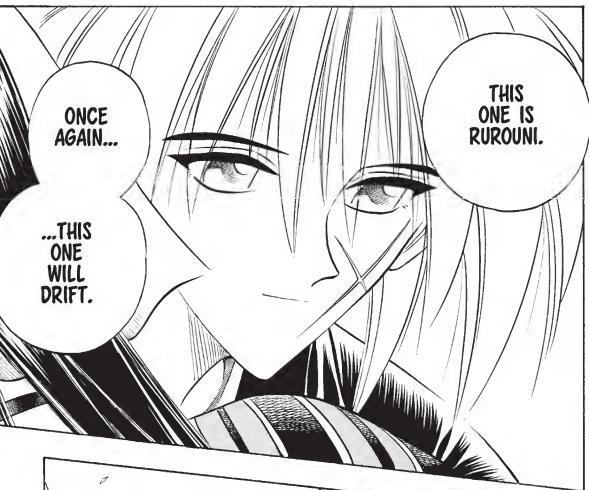
"...IS NO
LONGER
PERMITTED."

"STANDING
STILL..."



SAYONARA.

THANK
YOU FOR
EVERYTHING,
AND...

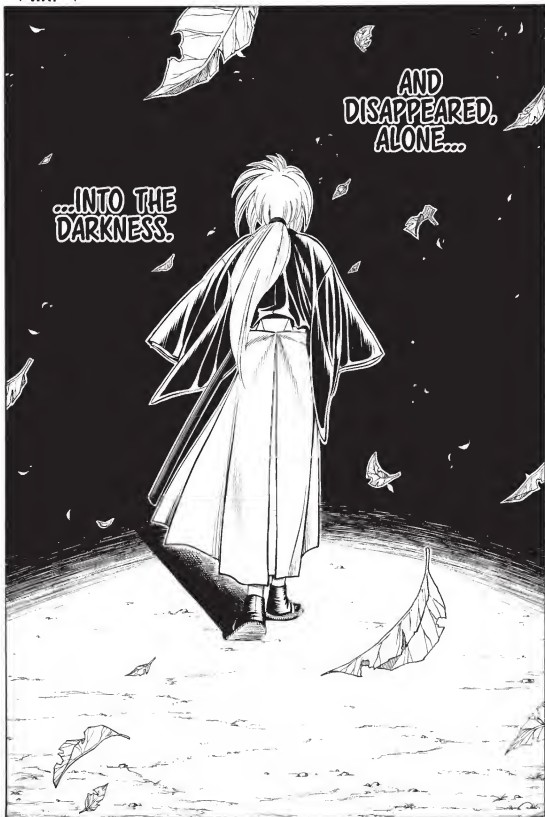


MAY 14TH,
11TH YEAR
OF MEIJI.

KENSHIN
—!

KEN...
SHIN.

ON THIS
DAY, KENSHIN
BECAME
A RUROUNI
ONCE
MORE...



GLOSSARY of the RESTORATION

*A brief guide to select Japanese terms used in **Rurouni Kenshin**. Note that, both here and within the story itself, all names are Japanese style—i.e., last or “family” name first, with personal or “given” name following. This is both because **Kenshin** is a “period” story, as well as to decrease confusion—if we were to take the example of **Kenshin’s** sakabatō and “reverse” the format of the historically established assassin-name “**Hitokiri Battōsai**,” for example, it would make little sense to then call him “**Battōsai Himura**.”*

Hirazuki

Said to be the original move upon which Saitō’s **Gatotsu** is based, used mainly for thrusts, stabbing, and slashing downward.

Hiten Mitsurugi-ryū

Kenshin’s sword technique, used more for defense than offense. An “ancient style that pits one against many,” it requires exceptional speed and agility to master.

hitokiri

An assassin. Famous swordsmen of the period were sometimes thus known to adopt “professional” names—**Kawakami Gensai**, for example, was also known as “Hitokiri Gensai.”

Ishin Shishi

Loyalist or pro-Imperialist **patriots** who fought to restore the Emperor to his ancient seat of power

Kamiya Kasshin-ryū

Sword-arts or **kenjutsu** school established by Kaoru’s father, who rejected the ethics of **Satsujin-ken** for **Katsujin-ken**

katana

Traditional Japanese longsword (curved, single-edge, worn cutting-edge up) of the samurai. Used primarily for slashing; can be wielded either one- or two-handed.

Katsujin-ken

“Swords that give life”; the sword-arts style developed over ten years by Kaoru’s father and founding principle of **Kamiya Kasshin-ryū**.

Bakumatsu

Final, chaotic days of the Tokugawa regime

-chan

Honorific. Can be used either as a diminutive (e.g., with a small child—“Little Hanako or Kentarō”), or with those who are grown, to indicate affection (“My dear...”)

dojo

Martial arts training hall

-dono

Honorific. Even more respectful than **-san**; the effect in modern-day Japanese conversation would be along the lines of “Milord So-and-So.” As used by Kenshin, it indicates both respect and humility.

Edo

Capital city of the **Tokugawa Bakufu**; renamed **Tokyo** (“Eastern Capital”) after the Meiji Restoration

Gatotsu

The signature attack of Saitō Hajime, series creator Watsuki reportedly based his (fictional) version on an actual, historical, horizontal (or “flat”) sword-technique.

Himura Battōsai

Swordsmen of legendary skills and former assassin (**hitokiri**) of the **Ishin Shishi**

Himura Kenshin

Kenshin’s “real” name, revealed to Kaoru only at her urging

Satsujin-ken

"Swords that give death"; a style of swordsmanship rejected by Kaoru's father

Shinsengumi

"True to the old ways and risking their lives to preserve the old shōgunate system," the popular view of the Shinsengumi ("newly elected group") was that of swordsmen as charismatic as they were skilled. Of note: Thanks to the popularity of the NHK drama of the same name, several historical sites in Japan are reportedly enjoying record attendance levels of late.

shōgun

Feudal military ruler of Japan

shōgunate

See **Tokugawa Bakufu**

soba

Noodles made usually of buckwheat, approximately as thick as spaghetti, served hot and/or cold. If there's a signifier, it's that their economy (simplicity) makes them a humble dish, eaten by humble folk (in the story, Saitō makes a point of mentioning that he's fond of them).

"Swift death to evil" (Aku • Soku • Zan)

Claimed within the story by Saitō to be a code of justice common not just to Shinsengumi, but also to hitokiri

Tokugawa Bakufu

Military feudal government which dominated Japan from 1603 to 1867

Tokyo

The renaming of "Edo" to "Tokyo" is a marker of the start of the Meiji Restoration

Kawakami Gensai

Real-life, historical inspiration for the character of **Himura Kenshin**

kenjutsu

The art of fencing; sword arts; kendō

-kun

Honorific. Used in the modern day among male students, or those who grew up together, but another usage—the one you're more likely to find in **Rurouni Kenshin**—is the "superior-to-inferior" form, intended as a way to emphasize a difference in status or rank, as well as to indicate familiarity or affection.

loyalists

Those who supported the return of the Emperor to power; **Ishin Shishi**

Meiji Restoration

1853-1868; culminated in the collapse of the **Tokugawa Bakufu** and the restoration of imperial rule. So called after Emperor Meiji, whose chosen name was written with the characters for "culture and enlightenment."

patriots

Another term for **Ishin Shishi**... and when used by Sano, not a flattering one

rurouni

Wanderer, vagabond

sakabatō

Reversed-edge sword (the dull edge on the side the sharp should be, and vice versa); carried by Kenshin as a symbol of his resolution never to kill again

-san

Honorific. Carries the meaning of "Mr.," "Ms.," "Miss," etc., but used more extensively in Japanese than its English equivalent (note that even an enemy may be addressed as "-san").